

Part-Time Pedagogy?:
Examining the Role of Occasional Teachers in Ontario's Classrooms

Gianluca G. Agostinelli, MA, BEd, OCT

Department of Graduate and Undergraduate
Studies in Education

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Faculty of Education, Brock University
St. Catharines, Ontario

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Abstract

This study examines the peripherality and precarity of occasional teaching, and explores how the instructional practice of daily substitute teachers in Ontario can be made more meaningful for both themselves and their students. Using an autoethnographic approach informed by my own experiences as an Occasional Teacher (OT), I consider, critically, the ongoing challenges and issues that impede OTs at both the elementary and secondary levels from belonging to a school's culture, and from perceiving their work as enriching and rewarding. Since the number of and demand for OTs in Ontario continue to rise steadily, this Major Research Project (MRP) helps to provide current and prospective OTs with a contemporary perspective from an active member in the teaching profession. While most of the literature on occasional teaching centers on classroom management—in itself, a fundamental component to successful instruction—such an established and rigid focus, I contend, precludes the prospect of considering if and how OTs can shape and apply efficacious pedagogies in the classroom. Working with theories from the fields of legitimate peripheral participation and critical pedagogy, I present, herein, some of the prominent issues that affect both the practice and personal positionality of OTs. More importantly, I offer suggestions, through a series of self-reflexive vignettes, about how substitute teachers can, precisely because of their marginality, perceive their nomadism as an advantageous source of opportunity that affords increased possibility for the construction and dissemination of knowledge, which ultimately contributes toward participatory, liberatory learning and the democratization of the classroom. What this project seeks to express, therefore, is that educators cannot afford to let critical pedagogy be an occasional effort.

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I would like to thank my supervisor, Dr. Susan Drake, for her patience, trust, expertise, and counsel. This year has presented numerous, unexpected challenges and setbacks, both academic and personal. Susan, however, has kept faith in me; she has allowed me an unparalleled degree of freedom with my research, and has always been supportive of my endeavours. She is, for me, the model of dedication, strength, and perseverance. She continues to be an ageless fountain of knowledge, and an inspiration to her students, both past and present. I am honoured to have had the opportunity to study under and work alongside Susan, whose work in the field of education has informed and guided countless cohorts of teacher-candidates and graduate students. Over the course of this academic year, I have grown to appreciate Susan's honesty. I know that she has my own best interests at heart, and I cannot thank her enough for her compassion, wit, and friendship.

My professor, Dr. Leanne Taylor, is equally deserving of recognition and praise. She is one of the most passionate and unassuming instructors whom I have had the pleasure of meeting. Leanne's ability to establish a conversational tone, both within and outside of class, is what drew me towards her. Her relaxed demeanour is comforting and warm. Leanne's courses, both graduate and undergraduate, have invited me to critically consider my own positionality, acknowledge bias, and encourage my students to develop critical thinking skills in a classroom that is emancipatory, inclusive, and engaging. Every talk that I have had with Leanne, whether in-person, on the phone or via e-mail, has been productive and beneficial for both my research and for me, personally. In the short period of time that I have known Leanne, her words have helped craft my own teaching philosophy, refine my teaching practices, and truly see value in

what it is that educators can do. I have often joked that Leanne is the most human professor I have ever met—and that remains true.

I am grateful, too, for the comments and guidance of Dr. Michael Savage, whose name I had heard for years at Brock University as an undergraduate student. I was elated to finally meet and put a face to the name of the instructor whose reputation and teaching prowess have cemented his status as an integral faculty member at Brock. Michael's academic background affords him a unique research perspective, and his formal training as an Ontario teacher has made him a reliable partner in my own research endeavours. Though the scope and direction of my project had, due to unforeseen circumstances, changed suddenly, Michael continued to demonstrate his vested interest in me as a student. Rather than shying away from my new venture, Michael agreed to remain on-board and lend his expertise and support in any way possible. He is one of the most spirited and passionate professors I have met through my studies, and I am lucky to have had him as a reader.

I must also thank my longtime partner, Victoria, who has been, through my pursuit of two graduate degrees, especially patient and loving. I am blessed to have her always by my side, and I look forward to the adventures that the future will bring. She is as beautiful on the inside as she is on the outside, and deserves recognition, in writing, for her devotion to me and my studies. I apologize for every time I have complained to her about my workload or teaching stresses, and hope that she understands how eternally thankful I am for her company, care, and selflessness.

Lastly, I would like to thank my parents, Cindy and Bruno. They are, without doubt, the reason that I continue to remain focused and motivated in the face of affliction. I continue to look at my parents with great fondness, and I hope that they are as proud of me as I am of them. I would like to thank them for a lifetime of generosity, support, sacrifice, and unconditional love.

Although they did not have the opportunity to attend a post-secondary institution, they remain my heroes and my most influential teachers. I pray for their continued strength during this period of great need, and hope that my own successes, as direct reflections of their parenting, may bring them comfort.

Dedication

On March 9, 2016, my only sibling, Bruno, passed away in a tragic motorcycle accident. Bruno was a retired professional tennis player and former two-time national tennis champion. At the University of Kentucky, he captained the men's tennis team and reached a ranking of #2 in the country. He was a man of few words, but his smile and nod conveyed everything that needed to be said. His kindness illuminated every room and every tennis court. He had always been humble about his accomplishments, despite having so many. Though he held his newborn son, Alessio, for only twelve days, I know that, during that period, Bruno was the happiest he had ever been. Bruno had a great deal of patience and never seemed to be bothered by anything. As a national coach, he touched the lives of many students and players, and will continue to do so forever. His legacy will live on whenever and wherever those who knew him share his stories. As brothers, we often downplayed each other's successes and pushed one another to strive for more in every capacity. Bruno will continue to be my motivation and my inspiration. Although I never did get the chance to say goodbye to him, I take comfort in knowing that, the last time we talked, we were laughing and making fun of each other like we had always done. Bruno protected me since the day I was born, and I know that he will continue to watch over me for the rest of my life. He was, beyond doubt, a greater brother to me than I could have ever been to him, but I pray, from the bottom of my heart, that Bruno knows how much I love him and miss him. Rest in peace, brother. This one is for you.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE PROJECT

This project truly represents the culmination of thought and work throughout the course of two academic terms of study. It is, for me, a presentation of personal teaching experience that intersects with critical pedagogy and applies theory into practice. Last year, during my Master of Arts (MA) studies in English Language and Literature, I asked, often, “How can we make theory more practical, accessible, and meaningful for teachers and students? What can we, as scholars and as educators, do to ensure that ‘praxis’ is not just a zeitgeist or an unrealized ideal? How can we learn from our own practice to better inform it?” These questions, I soon understood, were best suited for a rigorous research project not in English literature but, rather, one in the evolving field of education. Consequently, I applied to Brock University’s Master of Education program and, in September of 2015, began studies in the research-based, Social and Cultural Contexts of Education stream.

During my graduate studies, I became very interested in critical pedagogies and how, on a pragmatic level, they could be explored, shaped, and applied in daily classroom practice. In each seminar, when learning about the critical pedagogies, I was quick to critique a theorist’s or author’s privileging of full-time, permanent instructors in the elementary, secondary, and post-secondary levels. I wondered, often, “What about teachers, like me, who are occasional? How can substitute teachers—and their students—benefit from the teachings of critical pedagogy?” These questions grabbed hold of me and, by the end of my first term, were voiced in every seminar. When I considered that most of my cohort peers were occasional teachers as well, and that my university students would soon be, and would remain for quite some time, supply teachers, these questions became even more meaningful and pressing. To respond, formally, to these queries, I introduce my MRP.

Background

One of my favourite quotations that continues to guide my research and teaching practices was written by Syed Khalid Hussan in an epilogue to Harsha Walia's *Undoing Border Imperialism* (2013). It reads: “We live in a world where what we know sits like one pebble on the shore of an ocean of what we don't know” (p. 283). When I was an undergraduate student in the Concurrent Education program at Brock University, I used to think that, through quantitative and qualitative research studies, scholars would be able to discover, definitively, the answers to complex, nuanced topics within the field of education. I slowly started to recognize, however, that the presentation of one's findings is but one entry into an open, ongoing dialogue of ideas, approaches, and practices that, collectively, aims to explore a particular area in a larger context. The notion of specialization, of refining the scope of a project, was introduced to me during my first graduate degree, wherein I was told that it is better to know a lot about *a* topic than little about an array of topics. In an effort to lend authority and credibility to my opinions and research, then, I set out, herein, to focus not on the ocean of what I do not know but, rather, on the single pebble of what I do know. Writing with a greater appreciation for Hussan's outlook, I do not seek to solve the issues embedded in the profession of occasional teaching but, rather, aim to highlight, acknowledge, and work through them so that supply teachers may see their role as worthwhile, rewarding, and beneficial.

Since this project is constructed, in part, as an “autoethnographic” study, it is necessary to explicitly recognize both my academic and professional background, and demonstrate how my subjectivity, including my personal experiences and biases, might work to shape the source and scope of my research. In September 2015, just a few weeks after I had begun my first courses in the Master of Education program at Brock, I received a telephone call from a Human Resources

representative working at a Catholic school board in southern Ontario. At the time, I was coaching the varsity boys' and girls' tennis teams at a local, Catholic secondary school. The young woman on the line had informed me that, because of my recent, successful completion of the French as a Second Language (FSL) Additional Qualification (AQ) course, I had been hired to the Occasional Teachers Roster. I had completed an interview with the same board in early February of 2014, so I was relieved and elated when I received a notification of my latest position. Before being hired by the board as an Occasional Teacher (OT), I was previously employed in it as a Literacy Tutor and Supervisor of an after-school mentorship program for six years. Though I typically specialize in FSL instruction nowadays, I have, throughout the last ten months, been a substitute teacher for a variety of subjects across the kindergarten, elementary, and secondary levels. In my professional experience, I have keenly observed both the perception and treatment of substitute teachers, not only from permanent teachers, but from other supply teachers, as well. I have noticed that, aside from classroom management problems, there are several challenges and issues which continue to negatively impact the practice of OTs who, unlike their full-time counterparts, do not typically feel included, appreciated, or able to contribute positively and meaningfully to a school's culture.

After supervising dozens of work periods, wherein students did little more than complete mundane worksheets devoid of criticality, I began to think deeply about the notion of instruction and how both knowledge and authority are constructed and disseminated in the classroom through daily teachings. I read, a few times, the "Expectations of Occasional Teacher" *[sic]* in my board's Occasional Teaching Handbook, and started to ponder the potentially productive, but relatively unacknowledged, intersection of critical pedagogy and occasional teaching to be able to participate more confidently in my seminars at Brock University. When learning about the

most effective instructional practices and influential critical pedagogies in my classes, I often remarked that such approaches would benefit a seasoned, permanent teacher with his or her own classroom. But what of substitute teachers? I distinctly recall having said in my seminar, “Critical pedagogy is great, but am I going to remember how to be able to apply it in my own classroom if and when I get a contract position in the next 10, 15 years? What can I do to make critical pedagogy relevant in my practice *now*?” These questions have since inspired a concerted effort to reflect critically upon my own experiences as an OT through the lens of legitimate peripheral participation to assess the marginality and potentiality of supply teachers in shared, yet exclusive, communities of practice.

A supply teacher in Ontario, generally, can be expected to dress in a professional manner, follow the homeroom teacher’s program as closely as possible to maintain established routines and to provide “meaningful experiences,” perform the teaching and supervisory duties of the regular classroom teacher, and provide appropriate care for all students with medical conditions requiring attention (OSSTF, 2005). While these expectations are accurate and help articulate the responsibilities and duties of a substitute teacher, they are, except for the potentially redeeming, albeit ambiguous, “meaningful experiences” section, focused on policy and procedure, rather than on the quality of instruction. The expectations above are consistent with the rules and regulations of boards within and beyond Ontario that, together, shape the public perception that, for OTs, the actual “teaching” component is a secondary effort, a less important feature of daily practice. Such an understanding imagines the work of OTs as supervisory rather than educative and instructive, the consequence of which lends to the development of insecure identities, marginal participation, and lack of career satisfaction. Though a great deal of literature has been produced to focalize aspects of order, professionalism, and classroom management, since the

formalization of supply teaching as a line of work in the early twentieth century (Baldwin, 1934), little academic interest has been generated on the nexus of the daily, instructional practices and pedagogical approaches of substitute teachers.

Pollack (2010), echoing Duggleby (2007), suggests that, to some degree, every occasional teacher is marginalized in the mainstream education system (p. 3). The Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation (OSSTF) explains that OTs embrace comedian Rodney Dangerfield as their “patron saint” because, in spite of their difficult working conditions, they “get no respect” (p. 4). In a document titled “Survival Skills for Occasional Teachers” (2005), which outlines the reality of occasional teaching, members of the OSSTF caution current and prospective substitute teachers about what the profession might actually entail and cause: “You’ll find you’re a non-entity in the Staff room. No one wants to hear your opinions or have you intrude on their conversation,” “You have no idea whether you’ll get enough work to pay the bills,” “You’ll be afraid to admit to any problems, for fear that you won’t be called back again,” “If this is your first teaching experience, you’ll wonder if you’ve picked the right profession,” “In summary, the only thing worse than *not* being called, is *being* called” (p. 4). The OSSTF (2005) adds that OTs have endured disrespectful, belittling treatment for decades, and mocks the query, “Are they still giving ‘subs’ a hard time?” (p. 5). Substitute teachers, simply because of the nature of their role, are cast as “outsiders” in the context of a school community, the process of which, Duggleby and Badali (2007) argue, results not in OTs attempting to assert themselves among permanent members of staff in a school or faculty lounge but, rather, in substitute teachers further isolating themselves by, when possible, remaining in the hidden, safe space of their classroom before or after school and even during lunch break (p. 32).

The occasional teaching profession’s current landscape posits that, due to many cutbacks

in provincial and board funds, and the rising numbers of certified educators across Ontario, more teachers will be entering classrooms on an occasional basis for even longer periods of time (Hall, 2013). The Canadian Council on Learning (CCOL) suggests that recent graduates' first teaching experiences in the education system will be as temporary supply teachers (2008, p. 2).

Regardless of this knowledge, OTs continue to be undervalued, poorly supported, and inadequately prepared for their new, but increasingly necessary, roles (CCOL, 2008, p. 3).

Ontario's investment in and endorsement of a cheaper labour force, which receives less benefits coverage and virtually no job security (Gonzales, 2002, p. 60), produces a most grim outlook for passionate and eager new hires who, like myself, wish not merely to be treated in an equitable manner but also to be given the opportunity to actually *teach* students, rather than just 'sub in' for an esteemed, regular instructor. Pardini (2000) explains that by the time students graduate from secondary school, they will have spent an average of one year's worth of school days with supply teachers (p. 28)—a statistic also supported by the OSSTF (2005, p. 7). Despite such formative exposure to OTs, however, under the instruction of a substitute teacher, students are frequently asked to complete mundane "busy work" or to review previously taught coursework (Duggleby & Badali, 2007, p. 24) at their seats. If students may spend up to 10% of the school year in contact with OTs (Varlas, 2001, p. 4), why, then, are they assigned textbook work, games, or word-searches devoid of all criticality? Should every student not be able to participate in meaningful and enriching lessons on a full-time basis?

Purpose and Focus of Study

The purpose of this project, designed through self-study, is to discuss occasional teaching as a legitimate form of instruction that can, if perceived and treated as such, actually benefit and enrich students' learning on a consistent basis. My goal, herein, is to shift the current discourse

on temporary teaching beyond the areas of professionalism, policy, and classroom management, and usher it into the realms of critical and educational pedagogies, and instructional practices (Brown, 2012). By focusing exclusively on OTs, this MRP examines some prominent issues and challenges that may impede supply teachers, including me, from participating actively within and contributing to a school's culture. Through its consideration of workplace inclusiveness, self-perception, and career satisfaction, this project sheds light on the role of substitutes in both shaping and applying efficacious, critical pedagogies in the classroom. My study aims to foreground and expand upon the potentially productive liminal spaces that occasional teachers occupy to discuss if and how they may, in spite of their marginality, maximize their peripherality to make their daily practices more rewarding for themselves and more valuable for their students. In addition to presenting, in a creative format, snapshots of my own noteworthy supply teaching experiences, I suggest manners in which school administrators and permanent teachers can enhance and support supply teaching.

Occasional teaching, in Ontario and beyond, is characterized by the need for educators to be effective classroom managers, rather than classroom teachers (Brock & Ryan, 2016; Ciampa, 2015). However, with a pedagogy that incorporates and extends past holistic teaching strategies, common sense, and creativity, OTs, as suggested by my own experiences and the relevant literature herein, can merge classroom management strategies with sound instructional approaches that, in addition to promoting twenty-first century criticality amongst students, also encourage a deeper sense of fulfillment among peripheral and marginalized supply teachers. Critical pedagogy, then, should not be perceived as a comprehensive and ultimate panacea for OTs but, rather, as a strong, multifaceted foundation that encourages the destabilization of oppressive, dated, and ineffective teaching methods, and facilitates the development of inclusive,

engaged, and liberatory strategies. Since the cornerstone of critical pedagogy is the emancipation of oppressed subjects, it seems only fitting to use it as a framework through which an analysis of marginal, subordinate educators and students deprived of vital critical thinking is possible. I wish, then, to convey critical pedagogy not as *the* answer, but as *an* answer to the current discourse on the landscape of occasional teaching in Ontario. Through my study's analyses, self-reflections, and vignettes, I aim to demonstrate how tenets of critical pedagogy can be applied to occasional teaching to both inspire and empower the often alienated and insecure substitutes and their students, who deserve the chance to learn each time they enter into a classroom, regardless of the contract status of the practitioner before them.

Statement of the Problem Context

"No offence, but can you put the *real* teacher on?" Had the seasoned teacher on the phone with me politely added the word "please" to the end of her question, perhaps I would have felt, albeit minimally, more obligated to assist her with her interruptive enquiry. Her unapologetic and blunt tone, however, inspired me not to search for the *real* teacher she sought but, rather, affirm my own position as a qualified educator—an action which Galloway and Morrison (1994) note is uncommon for most supply teachers, who frequently "do not see themselves as professionals" in an environment where they are often not perceived as such by permanent teachers either (p. 3). After having assured my fellow colleague that I was, undoubtedly, not an imposter, she, seemingly unconvinced, replied, "You know what I mean—you're just the supply." I suppose that the word "just," in this exchange, was not used to acknowledge my standing as a distinguished member of the Ontario College of Teachers, nor as a graduate student in the process of completing a second Master's degree. The four-letter word, instead of recognizing our parity as educators, as partners within a shared system with common

beliefs and goals, reified a rigid hierarchal structure which, for me, continues to limit the potential and agency of occasional teachers in today's classrooms. After I had gently hung up the phone, I paused briefly to interrogate the legitimacy of my own title and role. Was I, in fact, a fraud, some sort of deceptive, dispensable phoney in dire need of authenticity and validation? Were my teaching methods, resources, and pedagogical approaches any less official or effective than those of contract teachers with permanent, stable employment? What, exactly, made me *just* a supply? And what could I do to become more than simply "just"?

Although daily substitute teachers, including myself, account for approximately one-fifth (twenty percent) of teachers currently working in Ontario (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007), for Duggleby (2007), they continue to be marginalized in their elementary and secondary workplaces on a day-to-day basis because they lack power; they exist, she explains, "at the lowest level of a hierarchy and are governed by others with more power" (p. 20). In effect, OTs, attempting to thrive within and belong to a publicly-funded education system which "prevents them from ever becoming full members of the teaching profession," are often treated poorly by pupils, teachers, and administrators just "because they can be" (p. 20). Such routine and palpable marginalization, which is even more pervasive among immigrant educators and racial minorities (Pollack, 2010), contributes towards an ongoing narrative of oppression that may inspire an inferior identity for OTs. The Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation (OSSTF), in its official, accessible "Survival Skills for Occasional Teachers" handbook (2005), views the classroom as a "minefield," a setting of constant struggle, wherein "[p]erhaps only the insane could feel comfortable working" (p. 3). Being an OT, the OSSTF (2005) claims, may be emotionally disparaging and "thoroughly disorienting and demoralizing" since OTs "don't really belong anywhere yet" (p. 4). The idea of belonging, both as an individual and as part of a

collective in Ontario's K-12 system of education, is especially nuanced given the increasingly competitive and precarious nature of the profession. If, as Duggleby and Badali (2007) claim, permanent teachers define the culture of a school and inform its daily instructional philosophies, policies, and practices (p. 25), what role—if any—can substitute teachers play in both shaping and applying critical pedagogies in Ontario's classrooms?

The work of substitutes, it seems, goes largely unnoticed (CCOL, 2008, p. 2) and, due to feelings of isolation and exclusion, substitute teachers may develop insecure identities over time as professionals in a field of sporadic, precarious employment, where permanent teachers tend to keep to themselves and, in so doing, indirectly block OTs from accessing a school's mainstream culture (Duggleby & Badali, 2007, p. 31). While few studies have documented the experiences of substitute teachers in Canadian contexts, even less scholarship, I contend, has concentrated on the role of OTs in disseminating critical pedagogies in the classroom—a challenging task that could potentially still empower students and teachers in spite of the profession's peripherality. For Kincheloe (2008), critical pedagogy is built on the belief that education is inherently political; every time a teacher fashions a pedagogy, he or she develops a unique political vision (p. 9). The process of fostering students' capacity to recognize, question, and interact with the political assumptions that underpin formal common curricula is a foundational undertaking (Kincheloe, 2008). However, such an endeavour, understandably, is ambitious; it mandates the continuous investment of long-term effort and interest. Consequently, Kincheloe (2008) suggests, "[a] first-year teacher cannot accomplish such a huge task in the first year of his or her practice, but over a decade can" (p. 10). While I align myself with Kincheloe's thought, his claim, here, indicates a sense of permanence, a level of stability in one's employment that demands constant, daily practice. What can OTs, who may be called into numerous locations

within a single day, do to foster such consistency? If the overarching objective of Ontario education is to facilitate critical thinking and authentic learning experiences amongst students, can we afford to let critical pedagogy be just an occasional effort?

My aim, here, is not to launch an assault on the permanent teachers and administrators in school boards across the province nor to critique or protest the politics of current hiring practices. Rather, as the teacher ranked 392 of 396 in seniority on my board's Occasional Teacher Roster, I want to problematize the notion of belonging and interrogate the bureaucratic education system in an effort to generate a meaningful discussion about how, despite a high demand for OTs, they continue to be reduced, institutionally, to students' supervisors who, essentially, are expected to do little more than manage behavioural issues in the classroom. Although the National Education Association (2003) affords OTs a greater degree of centrality by portraying them as "educational bridges" that maintain the continuity of instruction when regular classroom educators are absent, Miller (2011), describing the roles and responsibilities of substitute teachers, suggests that ideal candidates are those who can, with confidence, demonstrate the abilities to "manage a classroom, maintain classroom discipline, take over the work left by the teacher, and make sure the students do the work they are asked to do." Quoting Cindy Horvath, a principal in the Peel District School Board, Miller (2011) reveals that OTs who do a "good job" are those who are accessible, dressed professionally, can take attendance accurately, and can follow a school's rules and protocols. As a frequent supply teacher, I understand wholeheartedly that the traits and talents listed above are necessary to ensure a seamless transition for students but, with such heavy emphasis on order and procedure, is there a space for critical pedagogy in occasional teaching? Can OTs not participate, too, in the delivery of an engaged pedagogy? (hooks, 1994, p. 15). Or are we all actually "insane"?

It is not at all surprising that on the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO) "Resources for Occasional Teachers" webpage, all of the featured reading material is centered on classroom management and OT professionalism, while on the "Resources for Educators" website, visitors can scroll through twenty pages of content focused on holistic, student-centered learning, and progressive instructional and assessment practices. The distinctions in professional titles and (al)location of resources—which extend well beyond the webpages of the ETFO—strengthen the competitive power dynamic that reserves the knowledge of sound pedagogical approaches for full-time teachers. While it is, admittedly, still a privilege to work as an OT, it seems supply teachers are part of a lower tier, a second-class cohort of formally trained professionals that, because of its perceived limited scope, does not necessitate (access to) understandings of critical pedagogy. For hooks (1994), "[m]aking the classroom a democratic setting where everyone feels a responsibility to contribute is the central goal of transformative pedagogy" (p. 39). While hooks' comment is aimed at democratizing the classroom for students, given the unfavorable institutional view and treatment of OTs, how can schools become liberatory spaces in which supply teachers, too, may feel included and able to contribute? Although Gonzales (2002) suggests that it is important that school leaders take more interest in substitute teachers (p. 53), how can OTs ever become a key to unlocking democratization and participatory learning in the classroom if they do not even have a key to enter it? Can OTs interrupt and rewrite such an entrenched discourse from a subordinate position without becoming, themselves, the "(sub-)oppressors" (Freire, 2000, p. 45) in education?

Rationale

The perilous economic climate and uncertain state of education in Ontario have, in recent years, produced a commonplace culture of occasional teaching, whereby more certified teachers

in Ontario spend more time in the classroom as daily supply teachers. According to the 2015 report on teaching released by the Ontario College of Teachers (OCT), one in three (over thirty per cent of) educators certified to teach since 2014 are still without teaching employment, not even supply teaching (p. 9). Of those who have attained a degree of employment, 57% report that they work as occasional teachers (p.19). The same report also reveals that nearly a tenth of graduates registered as certified teachers more than a decade ago are still working as substitute teachers (p.13). While “job security” continues to be the main source of concern for OTs (p. 35), the challenging labour market shows no signs of relief soon, with “precarious employment terms” expected to “continue as the norm” in Ontario education (p. 9). While education is a chapter telling of Ontario’s economy and shifting demographic composition, it is but one part of a larger political, social, and cultural context, in which millennials, according to recent figures from Statistics Canada, are “scrambling to find employment” in a time of particularly precarious labour (The Canadian Press, 2014). There is no shortage of post-secondary education among applicants, but in an increasingly competitive market, most recent graduates are vying for unpaid internships or minimum wage, entry-level jobs that offer fewer benefits—or none at all—and less career stability (The Canadian Press, 2014). In a period when a generation faces an undersupply of permanent positions across many fields, it is understandable why certified educators choose to remain in education, even on a part-time basis, rather than seek employment elsewhere where experience is compulsory, but not always available.

Since more graduates will be entering the field as supply teachers, it is important to focus current research on the role of substitute teachers and how, through critical pedagogy, educators can resist ineffective practice to enhance students’ learning not despite of but, rather, precisely because of their workplace nomadism and marginality. This study, then, is relevant and timely; it

is useful not only for administrators and permanent teachers who wish to learn how to enrich the experience and confidence of supply teachers but, also, for occasional teachers themselves who, like me, may wonder on a daily basis how their role and perception can shift from a classroom manager or supervisor to that of classroom teacher and educator. My research project, which aligns with current shifts in paradigm that seek to democratize education to promote inclusiveness and student voices, is especially beneficial for prospective and current teacher-candidates, who may be curious about how they may eventually apply their skills, knowledges, and values developed throughout their educational journeys if they, unfortunately, might not be able to teach in their own classroom for several years. This document is important for current and prospective teachers because it does not shy away from ongoing issues within the field of part-time teaching; rather, it addresses the challenges associated with occasional teaching and provides tangible and practical pedagogical strategies, views, and approaches which may be adopted, adapted, and implemented not only in one's future, permanent classroom, but in the many classrooms visited on a daily basis currently. Supply teachers who are able and eager to actually teach lessons need to know that there is room for potential and promise in their largely undervalued and misconceived roles.

It is increasingly necessary to perceive substitute teachers not simply as teachers awaiting permanent, contract positions but, first of all, as teachers—as certified, qualified educators who, through their daily interactions with dozens of different students can certainly make a difference in the learning environment, experience, and outcomes of students. By discussing and focalizing the intersection of critical pedagogy and occasional teaching, this project charges academics with the task of expanding their research on and resources for substitute teachers from foci on policies, professionalism, and effective classroom management, toward those of influential and

productive pedagogical instruction. This research is important to positively impact the current discourse on occasional teaching, and to shed light on how substitute teachers can be—and are—integral parts of an otherwise incomplete system of education. In sum, this MRP, designed in part to express my own professional and student conundrum, will benefit Ontario's educational communities at the elementary, secondary, and post-secondary levels by discussing how OTs can work to inform the system of education of which they are a part, but to which they do not necessarily always belong. The findings of this autoethnographic endeavour, strengthened by current research and resources, will impact how higher learning institutions can prepare prospective supply teachers, and how the members of Ontario's publicly funded K-12 system can help support, include, and value all OTs. During what is, in essence, a peak period of occasional teaching in the history of Ontario, the Ministry of Education and its affiliates must consider how to make the work of supply teachers more meaningful and elevating than ever before. The problems outlined throughout this document need to be investigated so that Ontario students can benefit immediately not from a part-time pedagogy but, rather, from the full-time commitment of all teachers, including those temporary, to learning.

Definitions

Throughout this project, I will be using, interchangeably, many phrases which possess the same meaning. An *occasional teacher*, commonly referred to as a “casual occasional teacher,” is one who is employed by a school board to teach on a day to day basis. This definition echoes the current terminology in Ontario's *Education Act* (2016), which notes that “a teacher is an occasional teacher if he or she is employed within a board to teach as a substitute for a teacher or temporary teacher who is (or was) employed by the board in a position that is part of its regular teaching staff” (p. 18). In this project, I will be focusing, exclusively, on occasional teachers

who, in addition to being members in good-standing of the Ontario College of Teachers (OCT), are employed within a publicly funded district school board on a day-to-day basis, rather than on short-term or long-term contracts. This research study will not explore Long-Term Occasional (LTO) roles; instead, it will examine the functions of daily substitutes, whose workplaces typically differ each day. In sum, the following terms are, for the purpose of this MRP, synonymous: occasional, supply, sub, casual, temporary, and substitute teacher. These analogous phrases will be contrasted with words identifying teachers who are employed by a school board on a salaried, consistent basis, most often at a single, static school or board location. These terms include: permanent, regular, contract, and full-time. Additional theoretical and methodological terms will be defined throughout, as needed.

Research Questions

Though there is much to be explored within the field of occasional teaching, this project aims to investigate the following research questions: (a) Aside from classroom management, what significant challenges or issues continue to impact, negatively, the practice of occasional teachers? (b) How can schools become liberatory spaces in which substitute teachers can, like their full-time counterparts, feel included, valued, and contribute positively to a school's culture? (c) What role, if any, can supply teachers play in shaping and applying critical pedagogies in Ontario's elementary and secondary school classrooms? (d) How can the instructional practices of daily supply teachers be made more meaningful to enrich their own teaching experiences, and their students' learning?

Theoretical Frameworks

This research project both draws from and informs two theoretical frameworks: legitimate peripheral participation and critical pedagogy, each of which integrates the work of

many scholars and theorists. Through the lens of legitimate peripheral participation, the underlying objective of which, according to Lave and Wenger (1991), is to ensure more intensive and full participation in a community of practice (p. 36), I will focalize the significance of newcomers (substitute teachers) and old timers (permanent teachers), explore notions of membership and belonging, and examine how workplace marginality contributes to the precarious positions and insecure identities of OTs. A *community of practice*, Wenger, Snyder, and McDermott (2002) suggest, is one of intent and action: a pedagogic, didactic space defined as a “group of people who share[s] a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepens their knowledge and expertise in that area by interacting on an ongoing basis” (p. 4). For the purpose of my MRP, this understanding, which will be expanded in the next chapter, will be applied to micro, meso, and macro levels: individual schools, their governing school boards, and the provincial education system at large, respectively. My interest in legitimate peripheral participation will serve as a preface for my interaction with critical pedagogy: a collective of educative philosophies, strategies, and approaches that, for Breunig (2011), is rooted in social justice, constructivism, critical consciousness, democracy, anti-racism, dialogism, feminism, and transformation (pp. 12-13). Through this lens, I will draw mostly from the works of Paolo Freire (2000) and bell hooks (1994; 2000), whose foci on post-structural, engaged pedagogies, and resistance to the “banking method” of education foreground an ongoing and needed shift in educational practice which substitute teachers, too, I contend, can maximize. With emphases on critical thinking, and emancipatory, inclusive, and participatory instruction, this project focuses on and provides suggestions for teaching exercises and pedagogies that may foster the capacity to develop, amongst all students, twenty-first century knowledges, skills, values, and literacies as part of the contemporary new story of education

(Drake, Reid, & Kolohon, 2014, p. xiv).

Scope and Limitations of the Study

Since this project takes the form of an autoethnographic self-study that examines, in part, my own experiences as a substitute teacher in one school board, it is limited strictly to my observations. I must acknowledge, too, that all of my occasional teaching practice has taken place within a single school board, which is Catholic. Future research may focus on how the practice of supply teachers differs between Catholic (“separate”) and non-Catholic (“public”) boards. Though my instruction as an OT is conducted in French, English, and Italian, all the academic literature reviewed for this MRP is written and presented in the English language. The literature, then, applies mainly to education systems which adopt English as a first language. Since I am a trained, certified teacher in Ontario who practices within the province, I have attempted to draw from literature, studies, and resources that also provide an Ontarian context. Although the information presented in these texts could, theoretically, be applied to different provinces and states throughout North America, it is necessary to note that this project reflects and interacts with Ontario’s education system, teaching practices, and perceptions of Ontario teachers. Future research could investigate how the attitudes of OTs differ across different boards, regions, provinces, or countries. I must also note that I have been an OT for ten months which, in the field of education, represents relatively little experience. I have not, moreover, ever been an LTO, contract, or permanent full-time teacher in my board or any other school board. Consequently, my perspective is that of a substitute teacher only and is informed largely by the lived experiences expressed by other supply teachers, many of whom are my peers, colleagues, and friends.

While I have extensively researched different meanings, applications, and understandings

of both critical pedagogy and legitimate peripheral participation in various contexts, my knowledge of the fields has grown and been refined through my studies at Brock University in the Concurrent Education and Master of Education programmes. Due to my previous exposure to and interest in these subjects, the objectives of this project are inspired, in part, by my education and formal training, all of which, at the post-secondary level, has taken place at Brock University. Thus, I acknowledge, here, that my positionality as a graduate student and philosophy as a teacher have been informed greatly by the courses and instructors at a single institution, the consequence of which may engender a degree of predisposition with regard to my personal outlooks on Ontario education and how it could, through more criticality from teachers, significantly enrich learning.

To preserve the integrity of this research, and the anonymity of the students and teachers described through my vignettes, I have, in every case, wholly omitted the names of the students, teachers, and academic institutions integral to my experiences. This project is a collection of ideas and thoughts which I have expressed, both in-person and in writing, over the course of ten months as both an OT and graduate student. It is, in part, an extension of the information and thoughts I have presented previously in a short, unpublished reflection paper that I had prepared for a class in my Master of Education program under the instruction of Dr. Leanne Taylor, whose feedback is applied, to some degree, in this project. This autoethnographic effort, in sum, does not possess grounds for widespread and simple generalizability (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). Though it cannot be replicated to test the validity and verifiability of my findings, its conceptual framework, I contend, could inspire other substitute teachers to reflect critically upon their own practices and, by using the same or related literature to that referenced in this study, continue investigating the intersection of critical pedagogy and occasional teaching to help explore and

(hopefully) ameliorate the field.

Delimitations of the Study

In this project, I have chosen to focus on my experiences as a supply teacher in an effort to situate my thoughts and ideas within a larger body of research. I have not, therefore, interviewed or consulted other practicing substitute teachers within my school board or within the occasional teaching field at large. Future research could, through interviews with willing participations, look at how other OTs perceive their role to gain a greater understanding of how temporary educators feel about their instruction, participation, and overall satisfaction within a community of practice. Moreover, I have chosen to create vignettes rich in content that is particularly related and relevant to critical pedagogy. It is important to note that not all substitute teachers will, during each lesson in every school and on every day have the same opportunities to infuse similar critical pedagogies.

Though the design of my self-study obviously provides readers with the opportunity to learn more about my own thoughts and practices, the autoethnographic approach, as I will continue to argue, is still somewhat problematical in the field of research in education. Lassonde, Galman, and Kosnik (2009) admit that, “[a]lthough we are proud that self-study research has become more accepted, we are concerned that the term self-study is being applied to a variety of practices, some of which bear little resemblance to the quality and systematic methodology of [our] values” (p. xii). The authors admit that they are often skeptical of colleagues who proudly declare that they are going to pursue a self-study, while the work being done is, unfortunately, only tangentially related to true self-study research (p. xii). I wish to acknowledge that, despite some academic concerns regarding the authenticity and credibility of self-study research, I have deliberately chosen to use an autoethnographic method to both explore and present my area of

research. I have earnestly endeavoured to develop my study in a manner that is consistent with the academic expectations and rigour which several leading authorities on the subject demand. Though my findings and opinions may not, by all readers, be perceived as empirical, they are not intended to be interpreted as such.

Outline of the Remainder of the Document

In the following chapter, I will conduct a review of related and contemporary literature on the topics of occasional teaching and legitimate peripheral participation to highlight the scholarship on marginality, classroom management, and professionalism. In the same chapter, I interact with literature that explores a distinctly Ontarian context to further situate and localize the content of my research. I conclude the chapter by presenting relevant work in the field of critical pedagogy, which intersects well with my discussion of occasional teaching.

In the third chapter, I will outline my research methodology and design to share, with my readers, the structure of the self-study, along with ethical considerations and procedures for data collection and analysis. Since this project is conceptual in nature, the meaning of “data” takes on a less traditional definition that underscores experiential learning. I conclude the chapter by linking my decision to undertake an autoethnographic approach to its appropriateness for the area of study.

The fourth chapter of this document offers insights into the findings of my self-study. In this section, I integrate my personal experiences in the form of a series of vignettes which capture the intersection of critical pedagogy and occasional teaching. Each of my vignettes offers what is, in essence, an educative snapshot of my own practice. Though I invite readers to draw their own conclusions from my creative pieces, in the same chapter, I also critically reflect upon my vignettes and engage in a close reading of sorts, which both draws from and connects to

current literature. In my analyses, I demarcate the major themes and challenges for occasional teachers that emerge from my experience before providing a critical discussion and an overall summary of my findings.

In the fifth and final chapter of this document, I continue to discuss my experiences in a manner that raises implications, suggestions, and proposals for further research within the field. I continue to underline the need for occasional teachers to have opportunities to actually teach in the elementary and secondary classroom, but question the feasibility of such an endeavour. That is, as part of my conclusion, I consider whether substitute teachers *want* to teach in their daily practice, and whether permanent homeroom teachers would feel confident enough to allow them to do so.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

In this section, I conduct a review of related and contemporary literature on the topics of legitimate peripheral participation, occasional teaching, and critical pedagogies to underscore what scholars are writing about with regard to topics of belonging, professionalism, and expectations of OTs, particularly within Ontario. Herein, I also explore official documents from the OCT to more clearly express the precarious state of the teaching profession within the province. My objective is that of creating a context and establishing a milieu within which substitute teachers practice. With a greater appreciation for the circumstances in which supply teachers currently work, it is easier to understand the challenge, the potential, and the ongoing need for criticality that OTs endeavor to reconcile on a daily basis. What this literature review demands, then, is a reconceptualization of the role and function of temporary teachers in K-12 education both within and outside of Ontario.

Legitimate Peripheral Participation

Though the efforts of an individual learner are undoubtedly central to the development of one's knowledge and skill, as Alfred (2002) suggests, the emphasis on individualistic approaches to education demonstrates little regard for the student's sociocultural environment (p. 3). Learning and development, Alfred (2002) asserts, should be perceived as being situated in and mediated by the diverse contexts of a larger social world (p. 4). Since teachers become the primary members of a defined "school culture" that informs and is informed by their interactions within it (Damianos, 1998), education, as a system and as a process, cannot be considered devoid of content or context; it is, Alfred (2002) adds, "always filtered through one's culture and cultural identity" (p. 4). Though the sociocultural settings in which one teaches are certainly crucial, understanding how teachers, both as groups and as individuals, encode their social worlds and

interpret their own constructed identities in relation to others within a common space underscores the interactionist perspective which validates what Lave and Wenger (1991) name *legitimate peripheral participation* (p. 29): a development model rooted in one's readiness and ability to observe and participate in an evolving community of experience, expertise, and practice. Building on her earlier work on binary theory, which distinguishes between a teaching and a learning curriculum (Lave & Wenger, 1991), Lave (2011) notes that people have an "embodied curriculum" and that, through practice, may take on a "new identity" which, Lave and Wenger (1991) would argue, is made possible by one's mastery of a craft and continual membership to a particular community (p. 52). Such a community, Wenger, Snyder, and McDermott (2002) posit, is one of intent and practice: a pedagogical, didactical space.

According to Lave and Wenger (1991), in legitimate peripherality, the underlying purpose of which is to ensure more intensive, full participation through mastery (p. 36), a new practitioner attempting to gain access and membership to a community of practice is known as a "newcomer." The novel apprentice both observes and learns from the experienced masters, otherwise referred to as "old timers" who, in addition to embodying practice at its fullest, are "central participant[s] with a role in inducting new members" (Paechter, 2003, p. 542). While novices indeed learn from legitimate, seasoned members of a community, the instruction of the "old timers" may be implicit, embedded in their action and language and, as Bourdieu (1984) would suggest, exercised through their constructed habitus and cultural capital. Duggleby and Badali (2007) suggest that legitimate peripheral participation, as a theoretical framework, is a fitting lens through which an examination of substitute teachers can be conducted. The authors argue that substitute teachers, as newcomers in a transitory line of work, aspire toward old timer status—permanent employment—by "put[ting] in the time" and attempting to impress

employers: tactics congruent with strategies outlined by Lave and Wenger (p. 29). Learning is socially situated, and that learning about a job, or how to do a job, can take place only when there is regular access to other professionals in a community (Lave & Wenger, 1991) which, given the short-term employment of substitute teachers, is awfully difficult. Unfortunately, the work of OTs goes largely unnoticed because, for the most part, they continue to be marginalized and excluded from the formal structures and ethos of an institution (Duggleby & Badali, 2007, p. 24). Because supplies spend little time in a school compared to their full-time associates, “they cannot become full participants in the life and work of a school” (p. 24).

While Rogoff, Paradise, Arauz, Correa-Chavez, and Angelillo (2003) note that individuals attempting to both gain access and belong to a sociocultural community of practice must show their intent to participate by “listening-in” on and engaging, keenly, in observations of cultural activities and behaviours (p. 175), Davies (2005) explains that, although vital, desire alone cannot—and does not—guarantee one’s entry into what is ultimately a commune founded not on universal inclusivity but, rather, on meritocratic exclusivity. For Davies (2005), legitimacy in one’s participation is a matter of sanction from the hierarchy that both constructs and governs the community from which one learns and in which one teaches (p. 557). Supply teachers, then, lack open access to the community of which they wish to be a part and, before having the possibility to demonstrate their legitimacy as participants, must somehow exhibit their potential and value as candidates. In their article on workplace learning, Fuller, Hodkinson, Hodkinson, and Unwin (2005) similarly suggest that prior to being granted the opportunity to participate peripherally, a would-be employee must be certified, qualified, and able to meet—if not exceed—an employer’s criteria, both explicit and implicit. Since administrative overseers and old timers seek a different set of standards dependent upon the community’s or school

board's demands, and the characteristics of the division of labor in the social milieu wherein the community of practice is located (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 92), the question of qualification in a teacher's candidature is increasingly fluid.

By both building on and drawing from discourses of public pedagogy, Lave (2011) sheds light on a complex, multidirectional process of legitimate peripheral participation that, defined in part as "the development of knowledgeably skilled identities in practice" and "the reproduction and transformation of communities of practice" (p. 55), teaches learners not simply *what* to know, do, and be, but *how*, as well. For Lave and Wenger (1991), these knowledgeably skilled identities are "long-term, living relations between persons and their place, and participation in communities of practice" (p. 53). That identity is inextricably linked to a person in motion suggests that one's work encompasses a lived curriculum, which is, evoking Hall (2000), equally as fluid as the identity it produces. Identity, then, is not a fixed construct but, rather, a negotiated process, a production of meanings which shifts as one moves both within and across distinct communities, situations, and contexts (Alfred, 2002, p. 9). The prospect of shifting learning contexts demands a consideration of "recursive identity" whereby, according to Hall (2000), members of a community continually shape and (re)negotiate the identities of said community by "incorporating alternative identifiers, concepts, and theories" that, when practiced, (re)define a community (cited in Alfred, 2002, p. 9).

According to Wenger (1998), a concrete sense of identity is integral to a person's feeling of belonging in a community of practice. Since learning is perceived as "not just an accumulation of skills and information, but a process of becoming—to become a certain person or, conversely, to avoid becoming a certain person" (p. 215), it gains the capacity to transform both "who we are, and what we can do" (Taber, Plumb, & Jolemore, 2008, p. 274). The interdependence of

learning and identity is constitutive of “learning as becoming” (Wenger, 1998, p. 5)—an integral aspect of the social theory of learning that considers a person’s capacity for development in line with his or her states of being and becoming. In Lave and Wenger (1991), Cain (n.d.) defines *identity* as a way that “a person understands and views himself, and is viewed by others” (p. 81). This duality is integral to understanding how identity, as a sociocultural construct and performative aspect of teaching, must be able to exhibit one’s mastery and experience within a community of practice as validated by its central, permanent members. Wenger’s (1998) account of the interdependence of participation (how people engage with others to learn varied practices) and reification (the tools, rules, and guidelines that are part of all social contexts) (p. 274) help frame participation as both social and personal; it involves “our whole person,” and distinguishes between how we recognize ourselves in one another, and how we project ourselves, and our teaching, onto the world (p. 58).

In this framework of holistic, arguably idealistic learning that engages “the whole person” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 53), legitimate peripheral participation establishes the social relations of power that define and are, at once, defined by the persons—the members—in a community. The process of being able, as a substitute teacher, to be involved in new activities, perform new tasks and functions, and master new understandings suggests, invariably, “becoming a different person with respect to the possibilities enabled by these systems of relations” (p. 53). Within this spectrum of becoming (Paechter, 2003) the legitimacy and fullness of a substitute teacher’s participation are dependent upon his or her belonging to a community—a school or a board—which is “not only a crucial condition for learning, but a constitutive element of its content” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 35). Though simply being within a school and teaching alongside permanent teachers may seem to be grounds for legitimate peripheral

participation, as Duggleby and Badali (2007) note, supply teaching continues to be a lonely job, in part because contract staff members have little in common with substitute teachers, which is noteworthy considering a high percentage of full-time teachers were themselves once OTs (p. 25). If learning is a condition for membership and an evolving form of membership to the curriculum of the ambient community of practice, then social membership, knowing, and identity entail one another (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 53). The problem for substitute teachers, however, is one of access: Lave and Wenger (1991) see full participation as a time when a “master practitioner” is able to “do justice to the diversity of relations involved in varying forms of community membership” (p. 37) and, in other words, contribute positively to a school’s culture.

Boyd (1992) found that school cultures actually oppress groups or individuals who are new to the school by “denying them access to the inner workings of the school” (cited in Duggleby & Badali, 2007, p. 25). Since supply teachers continue to experience feelings of isolation, exclusion, and marginalization in their daily practice (Jenkins, Smith, & Maxwell, 2009; Vorell, 2011), it is important to understand that professional borders, both explicit and implicit, make membership to a community of practice based on a set of negotiated expectations and standards which work to hamper one’s access. Designated substitute teacher seating in the staff room, the inability to have a key to enter classrooms, the lack of opportunity to enroll in professional and school development sessions (including staff meetings), the lack of access to resources, such as photocopying machines and instructional texts, and the expectation of receiving additional supervision duties at lunch, at recess, or during another teacher’s preparation period, are a few of several, tangible institutional barriers which impede an OT’s legitimate participation within a school. Although the hurdles may not necessarily be designed to exclude, and may simply be created to satisfy security and privacy measures, such as needing to ring the

school's doorbell for entry instead of being able to proceed with a swipe key, or having to report to a school's main office to sign-in and out, they still work collectively to minimize one's participation, confidence, and feeling of inclusion and belonging. Taber (2011) suggests that "[t]he establishment of the boundaries of a community may involve the coercive exclusion of others and a claiming of superiority for members" (p. 344). Thus, legitimate peripheral participation—one's membership as a full-time teacher—tends to dictate one's identity.

Publicly funded schools within the K-12 system are hierarchical institutions with several levels and divisions of power. Within these communities of practice, few professionals, according to recent research, have less power, influence, and authority than daily supply teachers (Duggleby & Badali, 2007; Jenkins, Smith, & Maxwell, 2009; Pollack, 2010; Driedger-Enns, 2014). Being a full member of the school community is problematic for OTs: they develop both limited relationships with classroom teachers and insecure, unfulfilled identities that keep them along the professional periphery, never gaining full entry into mainstream school cultures. Working with this theoretical framework provides opportunities for educators, including those who are non-permanent, to challenge the status quo and to learn and grow from the circumstances in which they currently practice so that they may begin to positively impact not only their personal instruction and performance, but the workplace environment as well. Given the ongoing difficulties associated with OTs' peripherality, then, how can schools become liberatory spaces in which supply teachers, too, may begin to feel more included, appreciated, and in a position to contribute meaningfully to the school's culture?

Occasional Teaching: An Ontarian Context

Current opportunities for newly certified teachers are reduced in Ontario because there are fewer potential students to fill schools; most district school boards in the province, Miller

(2011) explains, “have fewer students and schools than they used to” (p. 39). Also reducing employment opportunities for new teachers is a slower retirement rate. Teachers are not retiring as early as they once had, and more retired teachers either enter semi-retirement or engage in “double dipping” by securing positions as substitute teachers ahead of newly qualified teachers (Brock & Ryan, 2016, p. 2). The process of waiting for permanent work motivates many substitute teachers to remain on occasional teaching lists for several years after graduating, and finishing Additional Qualification (AQ) or Additional Basic Qualification (ABQ) courses in the hopes making themselves marketable for full-time employment (Brock & Ryan, 2016, p. 3). For instance, since graduating from Brock’s Concurrent Education program in 2014, I have completed four AQ courses and am in the process of completing my second graduate degree. Though the process of waiting may, for some teachers, be a productive time in which to explore professional development opportunities, it is a precarious, expensive, and ongoing process which by no means guarantees permanent employment afterward. OTs seek what the OCT’s *Transition to Teaching 2013* report classifies as *real teaching*: a period of instruction wherein a teacher’s duties include, “establishing climate, covering the full breadth of the curriculum, adapting teaching to varying learning styles, assessment and evaluation, report cards, communicating with parents and so on” (p. 42). The report, though transparent, sees long-term occasional (LTO) teaching as exhibiting the qualities of real teaching. By contrast, then, daily substitute teaching is not *real teaching*; it is its own, subordinate entity that, unfortunately, given its implicit perception even from in the OCT, frames OTs as educators with inferior roles.

While most school boards have a minimum number of assignments that a supply teacher must accept yearly to remain active in its automated calling center, which usually sends out calls between 6:00 to 9:00 PM and 6:00 to 9:00 AM, the demand for OTs in Ontario continues to rise

in what has become a particularly precarious line of work (Hall, 2013). Typically, there are several assignments that are available on a daily basis for substitute teachers who are both qualified and eager to cover the classes of the would-be absent teacher. A missed or ignored call, then, is a “missed chance” (Hall, 2013). Writing of Allison Deckroon, an OT in the Avon Maitland District School Board, Hall (2013) explains that OTs often fear that their refusal of an assignment request, whether because of distance, sudden illness, or lack of a comfort with the posting, could cause a school board to doubt their commitment to teaching and to the board itself. In most cases, including in my own board, supply teachers cannot refuse more than three calls in a 20-day period, after which point a letter of warning is sent out, placing the employee on probation. If the infractions continue, the board reserves the right to terminate employment. Such policies are becoming commonplace as the search for jobs—even supply jobs—grows longer and more competitive for many teachers across the province at both the elementary and secondary levels (McIntyre, 2011).

Occasional teaching, according to Pollack (2010) is, by default, marginal work; substitute teachers, then, are marginalized within their communities of practice, especially if they are either born or educated outside of Ontario (p. 3). Internationally Educated Teachers (IETS) are “doubly disadvantaged” in the field of occasional teaching because, rather than being members of a stable faculty or staff within a school, they belong to minority groups who have even fewer opportunities to teach occasionally compared to their locally educated counterparts (Pollack, 2010, p. 3). In her study, Pollack (2010), working with OTs practicing in Ontario, notes that, to gain employment or maximize employment opportunities within a school board, substitute teachers are encouraged to volunteer their time in the classroom without pay. Whereas Canadian-born OTs are often advised to do so, IETs, on the other hand, are most often told that they *have*

to do so to be considered for a non-permanent position (Pollack, 2010, p. 10). Volunteering, understandably, can be beneficial for all new entrant substitute teachers because the process affords them more time in classrooms if they are not yet hired onto an occasional roster, or if they are not receiving supply calls every day.

While volunteering may be seen as a way to make connections and network with teachers or administrators who may recommend the teachers for future employment, the idea of working regular classroom hours without pay as a certified, qualified member of the OCT speaks to the precarity and instability of occasional teaching in Ontario. Such insecurity, however, is not unique to the teaching profession, as Canadian millennials, particularly in Ontario, are faced with mounting student debt, soaring real estate prices, and limited, unpaid, and part-time employment options across many fields (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, 2015.) Though volunteering may well be rewarding for a practitioner attempting to establish himself or herself in a community of practice, it is, to some extent, an exploitative means to further support regular classroom teachers and the boards in which they are permanently employed. Current and prospective OTs may learn informally due to their time volunteering in classrooms (Pollack, 2010, p.12) but, because they are not actually teaching, I would argue that they are not practicing the instructional skills necessary to support the development and application of critical pedagogy in the classroom. It is not at all surprising, therefore, that volunteer teachers are, like paid supplies themselves, often asked to perform non-instructional tasks such as photocopying, organizing, or preparing materials for lessons. Teaching obviously encompasses said non-instructional tasks, but the absence of lesson delivery from the volunteer system means that some OTs are not only marginalized, both financially and professionally, but are deprived of valuable training time, as well. Recently in my board, all OTs received an e-mail from an administrator

inviting volunteers to help organize and put on an event in celebration of a distinct Canadian culture. Rather than inviting full-time teachers, thereby giving OTs the chance to work, or compensating OTs for their participation, the board appealed to the vulnerability of OTs who, eager to network and to make a good impression, would forego the opportunity of receiving a supply call, and gaining financial recompense, to offer their services as volunteers.

Speaking of the ongoing competitiveness of occasional teaching in Ontario, Pollack (2010) notes that working indiscriminately across geography, grade level, and content area might mean more daily work teaching for OTs, but it does little to foster any kind of rapport with individual teachers or particular schools (p. 17). This liminality, uncertainty, and continued lack of access to membership in a particular community of practice may not only impede the development of one's identity, but might result, too, in OTs spending time in some of the most challenging classrooms in the public education system and covering classes, grades, or subject areas with which they are not familiar or for which they are not qualified to teach (p. 17). Substitute teachers will do this not because they want to engage in professional development through practice, but because they are, at least in Ontario, afraid to turn down a substitute job in an increasingly competitive workforce. Though OTs are encouraged to refuse unsafe work, or work with which they are not comfortable, the process of doing so may lead to (the belief of) fewer opportunities in the future. Authentic critical pedagogy, I argue, cannot grow out of a teacher's fearful or anxious instruction; OTs must be comfortable with all their assignments to be able to create a positive learning environment.

In addition to LTO postings becoming increasingly competitive, district school boards in Ontario must keep substitute teachers on the occasional roster for a minimum of ten successive months, during which time OTs must teach for 20 days before being eligible for seniority on

LTO lists (Ferguson, Benzie, & Rushowy, 2013, as cited in Brock & Ryan, 2016, p. 9). This is due to regulation 274/12 of the *Education Act*, which was established to stifle nepotism and unfair, disorganized hiring practices. Nearly a decade ago, Pietsch and Williamson (2007) found that “today's beginning teachers enter the profession in an uncertain and fragmented employment [...] characterised by short term contract work and successive rather than continuous appointments” (p. 16). The OCT's *Transition to Teaching 2015* document reports similar findings, with early career teachers still experiencing “months and even years of underemployment” (p. 5). While French-language teachers are the most likely to attract and obtain permanent employment because of the expansion of several intensive, core, and immersion French programs across Ontario, for the most part, “[l]ineups for permanent teaching jobs are still long in 2015” (Ontario College of Teachers, 2015, p. 6). One in three newly hired teachers takes about four years to gain full employment, and several teachers who, in 2015, gained any teaching employment were limited to piecework teaching or precarious contracts (p. 6). While Brock and Ryan (2016) suggest that other Canadian provinces, including British Columbia and Nova Scotia, show teaching landscapes comparable to Ontario's (p. 10), according to the OCT (2015), “[t]hose who do leave Ontario, however, continue to report better employment outcomes than Ontario-resident teachers” (p.6). The OCT's 2015 document reports the subsequent findings:

More than half of new teachers (57 per cent) employed in Ontario report piecework teaching contracts. More than two in five (45 per cent) at year end still teach part-time and similar proportions say they teach in multiple schools (44 per cent) and teach daily supply (42 per cent). Just one in five (21 per cent) of the first-year teachers employed in

Ontario publicly funded and independent schools say they secured a permanent teaching contract. (p.10)

While there is a small chance that a newly hired teacher may obtain full-time, permanent work, it is more likely that he or she will enter the teaching profession as a substitute, thus pointing to the need to further investigate how the work of OTs—which may account for years of teaching—can be both pedagogically sound and meaningful for both substitute teachers and their many students.

As certified members of the OCT, all teachers, including those who are occasional, must adhere to the *Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession*: commitment to students and their learning; professional knowledge; leadership in learning communities; professional practice; and ongoing professional learning (OCT, 2012). While substitute teachers understand their commitment to the OCT standards, as Authier (2012) explains, OTs report feeling less effective as teachers the more time they spend working as substitutes (p. 30). After several years of occasional teaching, Authier (2012) explains, some of his study's participants expressed strong feelings of being “isolated and unaccepted in the schools they frequent” (p. 50), which may make it more difficult to keep up with the changing nature of the classroom. While several call for continuous professional development opportunities for substitutes while they wait for permanent positions (Glatfelter, 2006; Brown, 2012; Brock & Ryan, 2016), access to such sessions, especially in Ontario, is limited. Consistent with Pollack’s (2010) observations, the OCT (2015) notes that early career teachers in daily supply roles and the unemployed receive “much less professional development than those in permanent and LTO jobs” (p. 7). Most miss out on extensive formal and informal school-based professional development, orientation, mentoring, and principal evaluations. The OCT (2012) also reveals that these same teachers “engage far less

with other educators in subject or specialist associations, in collaborative learning and in teacher enquiry” (p. 7). While some may argue that Ontario’s “NTIP” (New Teacher Induction Program) is a valid form of professional development, it is, paradoxically, reserved not for “new” teachers or daily substitutes but, rather, for teachers who manage to secure an LTO placement which, given Ontario’s current landscape, may be many years into one’s career (Brock & Ryan, 2016, p. 19). Such institutional isolation keeps OTs on the margins of an exclusive, member-driven community of practice that views colleagues as real teachers, as contributive and participatory members, only when they are able to assume the responsibilities of a seasoned LTO, who, rather than covering daily or weekly postings, has worked full-term or full-year contracts.

Brock and Ryan (2016) suggest that since most of today’s substitutes will become future permanent classroom teachers, it is important that schools and boards invest in them by providing them with the support, training, and professional development they both need and deserve (p. 19). Ciampa (2015), however, claims that the most prominent concern about daily occasional teaching amongst teacher-candidates is still classroom management (p. 156). While having control of one’s classroom is a priority and source of worry for most teachers, Hardman and Tippetts (2001) argue that classroom management and instruction are not mutually exclusive and that, although in both theory and practice, the two inform one another, the former tends to receive more attention than the latter (p. 21). Both current and prospective substitute teachers should perceive their capacity to manage a classroom as a mere foundation upon which the real function of schooling is based: the enriching experiences that help students achieve learning goals (Hardman & Tippetts, 2001, p. 23). Since classroom management seems to be so integral to the success of OTs, especially in Ontario, it is essential to consider how critical pedagogy and strong instructional techniques intersect with classroom control to inform a version of occasional

teaching which is not rooted in babysitting or behaviour intervention and, instead, in liberatory, inclusive, and meaningful learning experiences.

Critical Pedagogy

Evolving out of a yearning to give some shape and coherence to the theoretical landscape of radical principles, beliefs, and practices that contribute to an emancipatory, empowering ideal of democratic schooling during the twentieth-century, *critical pedagogy*, first coined in Giroux's *Theory and Resistance to Education* (1983), has, historically, been concerned with consolidating divergent views and perspectives to invigorate the capacity of educators, and to motivate them to respond to the impacts of capitalism, gendered, racialized, and homophobic relations on students, many of whom are from disenfranchised and minority populations (Darder, Baltodano, & Torres, 2009, p. 2). Fundamentally linked to the Frankfurt School, critical pedagogy, and the practitioners thereof, are dedicated to challenging the narrowness of traditional forms of rationality that define the concepts of meaning and knowledge in the Western world (p. 7). In other words, the principles of critical pedagogy critique, resist, and subvert the antiquated “banking” and “factory” models of education¹ by positioning students at the center of the participatory and engaged learning process. While a single or standard definition of critical pedagogy is difficult to imagine (Breunig, 2011), critical pedagogy, in both theory and practice, provides mechanisms for sociocultural examination of schools (p. 11). Informed by a foundation which demands criticality and self-reflection, students and teachers alike are more able to evaluate their social, political, cultural, and economic standing by questioning social norms and considering how these forms perpetuate exclusivity, oppression, and societal injustices both

¹ The *banking system of education*, a phrase introduced and most commonly used by Paulo Freire (2000), describes a traditional educational system, whereby students are perceived as empty vessels or containers into which teachers must simply “deposit” knowledge. The banking model is characterized by passive student learning, standardization, limited creativity and engagement, rote instruction, repetition, fact memorization, and a lack of dialogue (pp. 70-74).

within and outside of the school environment (Breunig, 2011, p. 11).

Critical pedagogy, as a theoretical framework and educative approach, acknowledges that classrooms are not neutral sites waiting to be filled or shaped by educational professionals; they are, instead, politically contested spaces that are informed by a plethora of often invisible forces, including hegemonies and ideologies that, together, constitute the hidden curriculum (Kincheloe, 2008, p. 2). Critical pedagogy, then, is a rather complex notion that demands a great deal from the practitioners who embrace it. Teaching a critical pedagogy involves more than just learning a few sound pedagogical techniques and the knowledge required by the curriculum, its standards, or the textbook; critical educators must understand not only a wide body of subject matter but, also, the political structure of education itself (Kincheloe, 2008, p.2). Though the difficulty to belong to a community of practice, at least for substitute teachers, may seem to preclude the chance of gaining an understanding of a school's culture, critical pedagogy, as an ambitious entity, seeks to embolden teachers to problematize knowledge, destabilize the rigidity of established paradigms, think and act in ways that make a discernible difference, both within and outside of education, and to reach new levels of social and cognitive achievement believed to be impossible (Kincheloe, 2008, p. 4). Rather than simply accepting one's marginality as an OT, therefore, the tenets of critical pedagogy would ask substitutes to interrogate the systemic conditions contributing to their positionality and, in lieu of working passively because of them, work actively to understand, challenge, and interrupt them so as to upset conformity and engage in teaching practices that are progressive and fulfilling.

Although teachers understandably must work within a system of education and, as is the case for substitute teachers especially, must accept opportunities to remain employed, Cochran-Smith (2010) argues that educators, through critical pedagogy, "are also working against the

system by creating recasting accountability in terms of rich learning opportunities for all students” (p. 461). Supply teachers, then, while needing to abide by the formal strictures and structures of their field, can view accountability of one’s instruction as the promotion of, preparation for, and participation in democratic education that is committed to social justice (p. 461). Since critical pedagogy should be created *with* and not *for* students (Freire, 2000), it is important that teachers, too, are active in the learning experience—a task which can, within a democratic classroom, be achieved through meaningful dialogue. Freire (2000) argues that, through dialogue, the teacher-of-the-students and the-students-of-the-teacher cease to exist and a new term emerges: teacher-student with student-teacher (p.80). The teacher is no longer merely “the-one-who-teaches,” but one who is taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being taught also teach (p. 80). By viewing students as Subjects, rather than as objects to be “owned” or “possessed” by the master practitioner, critical pedagogy encourages teachers and students to be jointly responsible for a process in which both can grow. At the core of a critical pedagogy, hooks (1994) adds, is the need for engagement and a holistic version of education that privileges different forms of knowledge and well-being (p. 15).

Critical pedagogy, Kincheloe (2008) argues, is a difficult animal to describe because within it there are many critical theories, the critical tradition is always changing and evolving, and it is, in part, designed to welcome and embrace disagreement and contradiction amongst its theorists and practitioners (p. 48). As a collective of social and critical theories, critical pedagogy should not, in any way, determine how we see the world; it should, though, help us devise questions and tactics to explore and understand it (p. 49). While critical pedagogy has evolved through post-discourses, including post-structuralism, since its formal, discursive inception, there have been key principles which still remain essential to its endurance and effectiveness.

Teaching, firstly, is a political act which, through student engagement, may inspire lifelong social activism and informed citizenship. Critical pedagogy, moreover, is dedicated to the growth of critical literacy and thinking skills, a social and moral consciousness, the examination of hidden assumptions, the pursuit of democracy and inclusive, multicultural education, the adoption of constructivist perspectives and praxis, and the fostering of conscientization (Breunig, 2011, pp. 9-10). While concerned with the performance of teachers as leaders and as partners in learning, critical pedagogues oppose deskilling teachers: a popular phenomenon, whereby teachers fall into a state of degraded professional practice when hyperrationalized reforms remove the conceptualization of the professional task from its execution, thus positioning teachers as low-level functionaries in educational workplaces who just follow the dictates of their administrative or governmental superiors (Kincheloe, 2008, p. 121).

Substitute teachers, though filling a role in sustaining the integrity of the teacher-student link in the absence of a homeroom teacher (Bletzer, 2010, p. 403), are especially at risk of being deskilled in the classroom because of the often uncritical lessons that they are expected to deliver. Contra standardization, memorization, and regurgitation, critical pedagogues promote the growth of critical literacy, which looks at how one's identity is inscribed by literacy practices. Becoming "literate," then, involves not just learning how to read and write, but also learning how to utilize literacy to critically examine one's own positionality. Critical literacy asks both educators and students to read the "world" before reading the "word" (Freire, 2000). To nurture one's literacy, a central theorist of critical pedagogy, Ira Shor (1993), building upon the work of Freire, challenges educators to critique teacher-centered, authoritarian models of instruction by engaging in problem-posing: an approach to learning whereby the curriculum draws from students' personal experiences and issues to co-construct knowledge. Through

profound questioning which prompts students to use and apply their resources, knowledges, and skills, teachers can resist “authority dependence” and engage their students beyond generic forms of instruction and assessment like lecturing and traditional pencil-and-paper tests (Shor, 1993). In problematizing generative themes of everyday life and academia, Shor demands a situated, participatory, dialogic, research-based, affective, and activist pedagogy that, without reifying neocolonialism, supports students’ autonomy and agency.

Evidently, the framework of critical pedagogy adopts a critical perspective that is, at its root, fundamentally committed to the development and enactment of a culture of schooling which sustains the emancipation of students, especially those marginalized (Darder et al., 2009, p. 10). It is grounded on a social and educational vision of justice, equity, and equality that does not aim to “save” students but, rather, to provide them the tools, strategies, and knowledge to help empower themselves (Kincheloe, 2008, p. 25). Its rejection of positivist values exposes dominant forms of knowledge and encourages both teachers and students to appreciate more deeply the contexts of a situation, idea, process, or event. As a result, learning is a lifelong process of meaning-making: an understanding which Stevens and Bean (2007) suggest has inspired the need for students in today’s classrooms to critique relationships among language use, social practice, and power, and view, with a particularly critical eye, all texts and all contexts as social constructions (pp. vii-xiv). In K-12 education, critical literacy, as the cornerstone of critical pedagogy, has inspired increased dedication to the development of other twenty-first century literacies which, as a collective, works to achieve the objectives and principles of critical pedagogy across a variety of topics. These new literacies include: media, moral, character, environmental, financial, global, multicultural, mental health, technological, and more specific, discipline-based literacies (Drake et al., 2014). Each of these literacies

cultivates the knowledges, skills, and values which students, especially in Ontario, are expected to embody and demonstrate through the KDB (Know, Do, Be) framework (Drake et al., 2014) that concentrates not simply on students' capacities, but on their personal identity, too.

Since teaching is performative (hooks, 1994), critical pedagogy affords teachers agency, and with it, much responsibility to continue reflecting upon and improving one's practices. Freire (2000) maintains that praxis involves both reflection and action. For Freire, there is no final act of knowing because knowledge has historicity; it is continually in the process of being and becoming (Darder et al., 2009, p. 10). Accordingly, Breunig (2005), paralleling Freire, points to the need for *praxis*: a critical, creative, and contextual reflection on an idea, theory, or experience that leads to purposeful action (p. 111). This metacognitive endeavour, which affords students and teachers the opportunity to consider their own practices, should be at the center of one's daily work because, as Giroux (1997) contends, it questions, practically, our assumptions, experience, knowledge, and surroundings. Though substitute teachers cannot always plan for their daily lessons, especially if they receive them minutes before they are expected to teach, they can still benefit from reflecting critically upon their practices and, through self-assessment, evaluate what works well given the circumstances, and what could be accomplished differently. Giroux (1997) asks teachers to ponder, regularly, the following questions: What counts as knowledge? How is knowledge produced and legitimized? Whose interests does this knowledge serve? Who has access to knowledge? How is this knowledge distributed in the classroom? What kinds of social relationships in the classroom serve to parallel and reproductive the social relations of production in the wider society? How do the prevailing methods of evaluation serve to legitimize existing forms of knowledge? What are the contradictions that exist between the ideology embodied in existing forms of knowledge and the objective social reality? (cited in

Breunig, 2005, p. 111). These questions which, themselves, capture the essence of a critical pedagogy, serve as a strong foundation for praxis, and should be shared with students so they can refine their critical literacy skills and question their understanding.

Since critical pedagogy embraces a dialectical view of knowledge that functions to unmask the connections between objective knowledge and the cultural norms, values, and standards of a society at large, it is necessary that students develop a deepening awareness of the realities which shape their lives, and discover their own capacities to both recreate and resist them (Darder et al., 2009, pp. 13-14). Though such an awareness, understandably, is perhaps most easily fostered by a regular, homeroom teacher, educators, administrators included, should not assume that substitute teachers do not wish to or cannot continue facilitating such conscientization. Substitute teachers, who occupy a unique, contested, and liminal position which straddles the border of marginality and authority, should not simply ask themselves, “What can I do to make this lesson interesting?”, but must determine how every lesson can be made to be more accessible, relevant, meaningful, and worthwhile for students. A lesson’s meaningfulness—its concrete value—through the lens of critical pedagogy, is not dependent on a student’s ability to understand, complete, or even master it. Supply teachers should not be concerned entirely with whether students have finished a task, but should, rather, be encouraged to question what purpose the task serves for students and their holistic development. If each student in a single period is able to read a whole chapter or fill out an entire worksheet as part of the homeroom teacher’s outline, then only a small portion of the lesson has been achieved. Students, following Freire, should not see their work or knowledge as “done”; they should instead be prompted to question how what is being completed, what is being learned in class, can actually be applied outside of the classroom to inform social practices and structures.

By interacting with students and encouraging them to evaluate the purpose and importance of their work, substitute teachers can help enrich the learning experiences of their students and, in so doing, make their own practices and their roles as supply teachers, more relevant and rewarding. If a student cannot see how his or her task may help him or her develop essential skills, knowledges, and values necessary to cultivate and participate within a democratic, inclusive society which, in its efforts to strive for excellence, embraces criticality and sociocultural awareness, then perhaps the student should begin to wonder why his tasks are worth completing at all. Supply teachers, I understand, are not meant to encourage apathy among students, which is precisely why we should ask our students to take a critical interest in what they are learning. We do not want students to passively colour pictures, watch a movie, or finish a crossword puzzle if they cannot understand how the task at hand will benefit them as active participants in society. What we do want, as OTs, is for students to resist generic, dated templates of what learning used to be, and to start thinking about what learning is and can be. If students do not see value in what they are learning with their substitute teachers, then they, too, are capable of recognizing and questioning such a disconnect.

Summary of the Literature

The literature review should help crystallize a few key understandings with regard to this project. Legitimate peripheral participation occurs in a community of practice, entry to which is granted by full-time, experienced members who act as masters and as gatekeepers to the novice learners and apprentices who are hopeful to move from the margins of the field into its core. With respect to teaching, occasional teachers, who are nomadic in their practices, remain on the fringe of schools and their district school boards because they cannot secure employment long enough at a single location to contribute positively and meaningfully to a school's culture. Often,

substitute teachers are isolated and excluded from professional development events and activities, the process of which further cements their subordinate roles within the K-12 system of education. Since participation and learning are invariably bound up with one's identity, it is evident that, for supply teachers to feel appreciated and included, rather than undervalued and excluded, they must find both pride and meaning in their profession. While common perceptions of supplies as inferior, teachers-in-training are pervasive and continue to shape the resources for, understandings of, and attitudes toward occasional teaching, it is important to know that they can, indeed, be interrupted.

The landscape of teaching in Ontario, unfortunately, continues to be precarious. While the introduction of Ontario's two-year Teacher Education programme may help curb the quantity of certified teachers in the province during a period of oversaturation, the current milieu is such that newly graduated teachers will most likely enter the workforce on an occasional (part-time) basis. In an increasingly competitive field, most new teachers in Ontario will be underemployed or will work as substitute teachers for months, if not years, before they begin to obtain steady, permanent employment. With many district school boards shrinking or suffering from lower enrolment rates and permanent teachers not retiring when they are eligible, there are fewer opportunities for new teachers to work on a full-time basis. While many are fortunate to get hired as substitutes, others, in an effort to gain classroom experience and informal professional development, will volunteer in schools. Though classroom management continues to be an area of concern for current and future OTs, Teacher Education programmes, school boards, and teacher federations should start to offer more complete training, preparation, and ongoing development (True, Butler, & Sefton, 2011). A school's administration team should encourage full-time teachers to create and provide detailed, meaningful lessons for their temporary

replacements but, despite calls for greater communication, substitute teachers are oftentimes left without direction. Rather than be discouraged or frustrated by their marginality, supply educators should focus on the potentiality of their liminal, nomadic position and, through sound classroom control and instruction, make their practice more fulfilling.

Since a substitute teacher's quality performance in a school may lead to increased chances of working in the same setting for longer durations, thereby facilitating more frequent interaction with the same set of permanent teachers and administrators, it is increasingly important for supply teachers to consider how they can augment their instruction and overall practice through infusion of critical pedagogies. Although a standard definition of "critical pedagogy" would, arguably, be counterintuitive to the ideals of critical pedagogy itself, as an educative, theoretical framework, it is influenced by a storied legacy of radical social thought and progressive movements in education, which aspire to link practices of schooling to democratic principles of society and transformative social action in the interest of all students, particularly those who are oppressed. Knowledge, for critical pedagogues, should be co-constructed and informed by the students' own experiences and voices. Through critical pedagogy, which takes the form of many different perspectives, such as feminist, engaged, human, queer, and anti-racist, substitute teachers can promote among their students the growth of critical thinking, social justice, critical consciousness, democratic values, and resistance to the suppressive, antiquated "banking concept" of education. Since critical pedagogy is, in part, dedicated to the development of self-reflection, it affords educators the opportunity to engage in metacognition, and to consider how to transform theories and philosophies into practice to make learning more meaningful, accessible, and relevant to all students. Critical pedagogy, in short, demands attention to praxis and the creation of a system of education that is emancipatory,

empowering, inclusive, and democratic. While substitute teachers cannot always create their daily curriculum, therefore, they can certainly draw from critical pedagogies to inform how it is taught.

My own project, then, rests at the intersection of occasional teaching and critical pedagogy: an underdeveloped but productive nexus which focalizes the importance and potential of an OT's instruction in the classroom. Though, historically, the literature on substitute teaching has centered on, and continues to center on, classroom management, such a focus undervalues the significance of what supply teachers are capable of as educators. By concentrating more on the type of instruction and pedagogical approaches that resist, rather than reify, the banking model which endorses busy work and traditional tasks, this project continues a quiet discourse that aims to repurpose the roles of substitute teachers in an effort to make their practices and experiences more meaningful, both for themselves, and their students. Critical pedagogy, like the substitute teachers who wisely elect to evoke it, is mobile; it needs not—and should not—be confined to a single classroom or school. Accordingly, OTs, because of their peripheral, nomadic positions, have the opportunity to allow the teachings of critical pedagogy to disseminate more frequently and widely than regular teachers.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

This chapter articulates my reasoning behind electing to conduct a qualitative self-study; it explains, in short, why an autoethnographic approach to research and learning is not just suitable for this project but, arguably, necessary because of the inextricably personal context of the topic. Herein, I also explore the benefits of incorporating vignettes: a less traditional, emergent form of research writing which captures the intersectionality of personal identity and professional practice.

Research Methodology

Drake, Reid, and Kolohon (2014) suggest that, to participate in and help engender the new story of education—a dialectical process that demands the consideration of innovation, pedagogy, and acceleration—teachers must remain committed to the prospect of change. To motivate such a change, however, each educator must work to make the vision of the new story part of “My Story” by reflecting, critically, on their practices as teachers (p. xiv). The personalization of the story, which posits teachers at the center of transition and progress, echoes Freire’s (2000) assertion that change, especially in education must be inspired by and come from those within the system (p. 46): in other words, from the teachers working, at a grassroots level, to ameliorate education from its frontlines. Evoking Dewey, who believes that educators’ deliberate, rigorous, disciplined, and participatory reflection leads to improvement in practice and the continual construction of meaning and purpose for teachers (Dimitriadis & Kamberelis, 2006, p. 11), I present an exploration that incorporates my own teaching practices and, more importantly, my close analysis of them. My work, shared in the form of vignettes, could act as a case study of sorts, a microcosmic exemplar which, ideally, may educate current and future supply teachers about our shared, developing role in a common system.

Palmer (1997) suggests that, although teachers may use several techniques and approaches in their classrooms, they have only one resource at their immediate command: their identity (p. 2). Selfhood and one's sense of "I," Palmer (1997) adds, is what shapes the sense of the "Thou," the identities of one's students (p. 2). Accordingly, it is necessary that educators and scholars resist the temptation from academic culture to split the personhood from practice, to honour an obscure and mythical objective way of knowing that takes educators "into the 'real world' by taking us 'out of ourselves'" (Palmer, 1997, p. 9). In the space of research, Palmer argues that objective facts are often regarded as pure, while subjective, lived experiences are suspect and sullied; in academia, the self is not a source to be tapped or a potential to be fulfilled but, rather, a danger to be suppressed, an obstacle to overcome (p. 9). Palmer's critique of objective approaches to research informs what he believes is a necessary, autobiographic approach to investigation that embraces rather than effaces personal context. To not be estranged from my own life and teachings, evoking Palmer (1997), I have elected to create a socio-constructivist self-study which, Allard and Gallant (2012) suggest, has the potential to examine meaningful learning for both teachers and their students (pp. 261-62).

For Creswell (2006), a self-study often takes the form of an *autoethnography*, which is written and recorded by the individual who, like me, is the subject of his or her own study (p. 73). Autoethnography, moreover, is the idea of many layers of consciousness, the vulnerable, coherent self in varied social contexts, and a subversion of dominant discourses (Muncey, 2010). Creswell (2006) adds that autoethnography contains the author's personal story and the larger sociocultural meaning for the individual's story (p. 73). The popularity of autoethnography is growing speedily, with researchers both within and beyond the field of education eager to interweave their personal experiences and narratives into episodes, including vignettes, which

Hunter (2012) contends are emergent inside stories, dimensions of qualitative research and writing that reimagine pedagogic experience (p. 90). Self-study, moreover, challenges researchers to confront self-understanding of the nature of teaching to develop an increased awareness of and appreciation for practice, skills, and performance which, through critical reflection and analysis, can be improved (Macintyre Latta & Buck, 2007). My decision to use vignettes satisfies my desire to present data in a creative, non-traditional way and speaks to the rising demand for “self-reflexivity” in research (Hall, 2012, p. 91).

Reflexivity, Piper (2015) notes, is a dynamic process that involves ongoing self-awareness and criticality; it leads to a stronger understanding of one’s positionality, confirms one’s interest in exploring research contexts, and even validates less established qualitative methodological choices (p. 19). Piper (2015) imagines self-study research as a formative journey that is equal parts process and product, a reflection of personal reflexivity that sheds light on epistemological underpinnings, and addresses the challenges embedded in the process of investigation (p. 17).

While the benefits of such an approach may seem unabated, Muncey (2005) explains that pursuing qualitative study, especially autoethnography, Muncey (2005) explains, may raise concerns about truth and credibility; her questions, “What is truth? Whose truth is valuable? Can truth vary?” (p. 7), hint at the notion that academia is hesitant about accepting new practices and methodologies that do not conform to prescribed, purportedly objective procedures. However, Muncey (2005) also argues that the rewards of self-study research outweigh the risks.

Autoethnography, she adds, celebrates rather than demonizes the individual story; it embraces and gives credence to a compelling, unique set of experiences in an endeavour to recognize and accept what may be considered a “deviant case,” an Othered form of investigation that foregrounds the centrality of the researcher (p. 9). While my project may lack generalizability,

replicability, and transferability (Letts, Wilkins, Law, Stewart, Bosch & Westmorland, 2007, p. 10) because of its methodology, since my perceptions of supply teaching are informed, largely, by my own daily practices, it would be counterintuitive to develop a study that does not focalize what is, essentially, my story, my truth. My autoethnographic research, accordingly, posits my practice not as quantifiable, empirical evidence or fact but, rather, as valuable, honest, and subjective narrative.

Design of Self-Study

Although this project's autoethnographic components constitute a qualitative analysis, this document represents, at once, a conceptual piece, which examines contemporary literature on the role of substitute teachers, addresses challenges within the profession of temporary teaching, and attempts to make meaning of the recurring social phenomena that both shape and are simultaneously shaped by occasional teaching. Jabareen (2009) views a conceptual framework as a network of interlinked concepts which, together, provide a comprehensive understanding of phenomena (p. 51). A conceptual framework, much like an autoethnography, explores ontological, epistemological assumptions and, more importantly, how they work to create a perceived reality. As such, a conceptual framework, Jabareen (2009) adds, provides not a causal setting but, rather, an interpretive approach to social reality; it does not offer an explicit, quantitative calculation and, instead, engages in qualitative analysis, interpretation, and metasynthesis: a hermeneutic reading of data that produces metaphors, ideas, and concepts (pp. 51-52). Conceptual framework analysis, rooted in grounded theory, aims to generate, identify, and trace a phenomenon's major "concepts," which Jabareen (2009) defines as constructed bricolages of social and cultural components (p. 50). It can, moreover, take the shape of an integrative review which, Torraco (2011) notes, "reviews, critiques, and synthesizes

representative literature on a topic in an integrated way” (p. 356) to make a significant and value-added contribution to a particular field. The outcome of this approach is to both identify and develop new contexts, positions, and perspectives (Brock & Ryan, 2016, p. 5).

What is perhaps most important about conceptual frameworks for the purpose of my study is what constitutes valuable, credible data. Jabareen (2009), promoting a post-structural approach to research, imagines data as a collective of interdependent “texts” that both represent and capture relevant social, cultural, political, and environmental phenomena in a particular field (p. 53). While a text may be defined literally as a book, article, or essay, its meaning should reflect variety and, therefore, include less material, multidisciplinary sources of information and knowledge, including dialogues, social trends, and even teaching practices (Jabareen, 2009, p. 53). Working with ideas from Jabareen’s work, then, I have created a project that, though rooted in autoethnography, still seeks to explore and interrogate nuances within and social phenomena that surround the occasional teaching profession. My investigation, though indicative of qualitative research, also endeavors to respond to contemporary trends across and literature on occasional teaching in an Ontarian context. My intent to both capture and reflect critically upon my teaching practices defines my vignettes as literal and figurative “texts” which, when compared to literary works, will underscore the need to further discuss the potentiality of critical occasional teaching. While my interpretation of teaching resources, official employment reports, workplace handbooks, and scholarly articles evokes literal understandings of the word “text,” my lived experience and teaching practice, too, become a text, a metaphysical, “embodied curriculum,” Lave (2011) would argue, that must be approached from a conceptual standpoint which validates both the importance and function of an autoethnography.

Data Collection and Analysis

The data for this project come in the form of verbal and non-verbal interactions which, in the past ten months, I have had with my students and colleagues at different schools and in many classrooms across my designated region. My certifications as an Intermediate and Senior instructor and FSL teacher have afforded me the opportunity to work with students and teachers from every grade level, including kindergarten, in Ontario's K-12 system. The comments, questions, reactions, and contexts heard and experienced throughout my practice will, as aforementioned, be presented in the form of vignettes: a brief, evocative, and detailed description, account, or episode (Hunter, 2012). The contents of these vignettes are not fabricated; they are genuine exchanges which have actually occurred during my tenure as a supply teacher. While some of the remarks are transcribed, verbatim, from my personal teaching and anecdotal teaching notes, most are pieced together from my own recollection in a manner that authentically captures the transpired events. When I walk into classrooms to teach, I do not intend to record my observations for the purpose of my personal research. Rather, I habitually document exchanges, lessons, and talks that, to me, are interesting, poignant and, above all, validating as a teacher. What my self-study does is allow me to look back on my writings and pull from my memories to demonstrate how my own practices, infused with critical pedagogy, serve to give renewed purpose and meaning to the role of substitute educators.

My journal, notes, and private blog serve as a repository for data which, up until a couple of weeks ago, were produced merely for personal reflection. Though I have been supply teaching since September of 2015, it is important to note that, because of personal and professional setbacks, my research project did not take shape until May of 2016. Consequently, though I have preserved anecdotes from my practices throughout the past several months, the information was

not intended to be used as data for any research project. My retrospective approach, then, demands an inductive approach to analysis, which considers my practice as a whole and negotiates conceptual categories that, in turn, lead to the construction of research questions. My project, in essence, poses four, overarching research questions through which my vignettes, data, and texts may be analyzed. It is also true, however, that my own observations and experiences are what have prompted me to ask my central questions. In short, my data both forms and is informed by my methodology and analyses. Such interdependence aligns with Hunter's (2012) view of the vignette as a bricolage: a constructed story where time, space, memory, and imagination are fused (p. 92). The vignette, which, in my project, is the foundation for and cornerstone of my analysis, is a crystallization of understanding for both the reader and the author. Though it does contain structures and plots, it is not an isolated piece in research writing; it is, rather, a self-reflexive, layered form of storying that problematizes personal history, curriculum, and pedagogy as a case in point (Hunter, 2012, p. 93).

Curriculum theorist, William Pinar (2004), theorizes self-reflexivity in education, claiming that reconceptualised curriculum or practice begins with subjective lessons of an autobiographical experience (p. 35). Britzman (2003), moreover, proposes a critical approach to the methods of self-reflexivity, which make available the discursive practice necessary to the critical theorization of teachers' experiential continuum, their constructions of meaning, and their subjective development (p. 66). The vignette format, then, affords me the chance to present my collected data in a creative way while using the constructed texts as the bases for interpretive analysis. In its concerted effort to deconstruct knowledge, decode information, and attribute significance to my teaching practice, my analysis foregrounds a concerted pursuit of criticality in my autobiographical experiences, the result of which facilitates a metacognitive exercise that

reimagines the role of occasional teachers. Strengthened by contemporary literature from the fields of critical pedagogy, legitimate peripheral participation, and occasional teaching in general, my analysis will act as form of self-assessment, which demonstrates to readers the potential and benefits of a critical approach to supply teaching.

Methodological Assumptions

Since this project examines, in part, the significance and potential of critical pedagogy in the classroom for OTs, there is underlying assumption that current and future substitute teachers will, in some capacity, have been exposed to or be aware of central tenets associated with critical pedagogy. It is my assumption in creating this study that, like me, other graduates from Teacher Education programs will have studied, at least indirectly, the theories, theorists, or approaches that critical pedagogy emphasizes. While knowledge of and comfort with practices and perspectives of critical pedagogy are not absolutely essential for readers to comprehend my project, to transform theory into practice, it is assumed that readers will have a limited background in critical pedagogy.

Limitations

To best appreciate the limitations of my particular study, it is productive to, first, explore the concerns and limitations of the autoethnography methodology itself. Méndez (2013) suggests that some scholars criticize autoethnographies for being “self-indulgent, narcissistic, introspective and individualised” (p. 283). Another concern that researchers present is the authenticity of one’s accounts. That is, especially through the use of vignettes or other creative formats of information or data demonstration, a description of the past, Ellis and Bochner (2000) argue, is always a story, rather than the past itself (p. 745). Conversely, Waldorf (2004) notes that the aim of a self-study, and of research itself, “is surely to reduce the distortion as much as

Possible” (p. 411). Walford’s concerns are focused on how much of the accounts presented as autoethnographies represent real conversations or events as they happened, and how much they are just fabrications of the authors. Authorship itself, then, may prove to be problematic when considering the function of self-study. While I believe that my own subjectivity and critical reflection as a researcher and teacher is the value of autoethnography, as Méndez (2013) explains, some scholars critique autoethnography for being too close to the research itself, and “therapeutic rather than analytic” (p. 284). My desire to interact with, analyze, and critique my own occasional teaching practice, however, is what makes this particular limitation less obstructive to the overall success and importance of my methodology.

While, in academia, there still resonates a perception that empirical evidence, quantifiable fact and data inform an objective truth to research (Méndez, 2013, p. 284), I believe that there is truth and value in one’s attempt to fully address the contradictions or limitations in one’s research and positionality, and his or her effort to reconcile them from within the investigation itself. Ellis (2003) explains that an autoethnographic narrative of good quality should be able to engage one’s feelings and thinking capacities at the same time as generating, from the reader, questions about the author’s experience, position, and lessons learned. Although ethnographic studies are criticized for their inability to accomplish a positivist, “real” truth (Méndez, 2013, p. 285), Ellis (2003) adds that through self-study, people build meaning in their own lives, the process of which may afford others the opportunity and ability to reflect on similar experiences and both benefit and learn from such reflection. An advantage to my methodology is the ease of access to data since I can call on my own experiences and practices as the sources from which to investigate a social phenomenon. However, it is precisely this unhindered access which entails a limitation; by subscribing analysis to a personal narrative, my research is arguably limited in its

conclusions (Méndez, 2013, p. 282).

Typically, as Méndez (2013) explains, there are two types of autoethnography: “analytic” and “evocative,” the first of which is directed toward objective writing and analysis of a particular and the latter toward a researcher’s introspection on a specific topic to allow readers the chance to make connections with the author’s feelings and experiences (p. 281). My study, however, may be limited in its execution because it aims, indirectly, to blend the two designs. Though I am writing of a particular group of people (occasional teachers) in an analytic manner, my approach is indeed complicated by my intention to write of my own practices as an active participant in and member of this group of people. Thus, the objectivity of my writing, understandably, is limited because of my intention to engage in a self-reflexive exercise. Consequently, because of the project’s inward focus, the knowledge produced might not generalize to other people or other settings. Though the context of the study may be similar for readers, given my unique practices, the data and findings of the study itself may not be able to be easily replicated in other projects. I do draw conclusions from my own self-study but, echoing Méndez (2013), the conclusions cannot offer predictions as the results in quantitative studies often can. Though my implications and suggestions can surely be mapped out in different contexts and scopes (Jabareen, 2009, p. 53), because I am technically the only formal participant in my research project, it is increasingly difficult to imagine or predict the findings from a larger participant pool which, in future studies, might include numerous OTs.

Ethical Considerations

To preserve the integrity of this research, and the anonymity of the students and teachers described through my vignettes, I have, in every case, wholly omitted the names of the learners, educators, and schools integral to my experiences. Because I was called to my substitute teaching

postings officially through my school board's designated, automated call-out program, I received permission to access various schools and classrooms to perform the daily duties of my profession. However, I was not granted consent specifically from my board to use my teaching practices as research. Accordingly, this self-study design has not been reviewed nor approved by a Research Ethics Board (REB) since technically given its lack of formal participants, it does not require clearance. All information herein, including comments, questions, and excerpts from conversation with students, is being presented in a creative, composite format that purposely erases identifying factors. The collected data do not provide evidence of students' location or identity; they are being used to underline my pedagogical teaching practices, rather than my students' behaviours. In all of my vignettes, it is clear that I am a central participant in the expressed dialogue. Though students are present in my vignettes, it is important to note that I did not, by any means, eavesdrop on any conversations during my practice. It is, however, crucial that teachers remain vigilant and privy to what their students are saying and, when necessary, intervene on or mediate conversations if they are inappropriate or pose a threat to the security of the school, its students, or its staff members.

Méndez (2013) and Ellis (2007) shed light on the ambiguity and complexity surrounding the gray space of consent with regard to autoethnographic approaches. In describing, in detail, the formative periods or experiences in one's life and practice, it is very difficult to ask all people who are involved in these narratives to give official consent for the publication of a project, and their implicit participation within it (Méndez, 2013, p. 283). However, Ellis (2007) adds a dimension to ethics in autoethnography that is potentially redeeming: "relational ethics," which refers to ethics involved in writings about personal experiences where intimate others are included (p. 6). Though there is no straightforward response to the question, "Should consent be

sought from all the people involved in autoethnographic narratives?” Ellis (2007) reminds researchers of their obligation to “do no harm” and that autoethnography itself is an ethical practice, one which demands that one is honest and open about the events described, as well as the content of the words expressed by the people involved in these events (p. 26). While some researchers will write about themselves in the third-person to afford a degree of distance and objectivity (Méndez, 2013, p. 283), my decision to recount my practices in the first-person suggests my continued commitment to full transparency.

The dialogues, then, were explicit and, in many cases, initiated by the students themselves. When teaching and writing, I am always respectful of my students’ privacy. Accordingly, none of the conversations expressed herein breach official or negotiated confidentiality agreements. While my anecdotal notes are informed by my personal experiences of occasional teaching, my vignettes are made up of several scenarios and are not reflective of any singular student, classroom, school, or time. Moreover, I do not stand to benefit, professionally or financially from the students’ natural, unscripted behavior and communication. As Megford (2006) notes, the “primary ethical standard” against which any autoethnography should be evaluated is “an ethic of accountability,” whereby the author should write his or her truth as if each of the persons involved in the described events were listening to him or her (p. 862). Taking this advice to heart, I know that I will be honest in my creative descriptions of exchanges that I have had with my students over the past ten months. While I have several stories that would be appropriate for this project, to be concise and direct, I have chosen the most suitable vignettes that explicitly demonstrate my effort to draw from and integrate aspects of critical pedagogy. In addition to each vignette being held to an ethic of accountability, I wish to confirm that the snapshots that I have elected to integrate as part of this autoethnography have

been selected not due to any sort of personal preference which I may have for one student or school over another, but because my practice is, in some cases, more exemplary and demonstrative of a critical pedagogy. Student and school names and locations are never disclosed, but I am still conscious of whose voices I may privilege in my vignettes and whose, in turn, I may be silencing.

Restatement of the Area of Study

My self-study (or blended autoethnography) will be coupled with a conceptual framework to discuss how substitute teachers, in spite of their marginality, can maximize their peripherality to make their daily practices more rewarding for themselves and more valuable for their students. My vignettes, which capture, in a creative format, my own noteworthy supply teaching practices, will shed light on how supply teachers can infuse their instruction with critical pedagogy to make their work more meaningful. While my autoethnography will underline my own participation both in this research study and in the occasional teaching field, it will be set against an academic milieu composed of essays, resources, policies, and handbooks which, collectively and individually, will be analyzed to frame occasional teaching as a legitimate form of instruction laden with potential that deserves greater recognition and esteem. My subjective narratives will personalize the day-to-day experience of temporary teachers to expand the current discourse on the widespread practice and explore and complicate topics such as inclusivity, belonging, pedagogy, self-perception, and overall job satisfaction. What my interpretations will reveal, in essence, are significant challenges or issues that impact and, in many ways, reduce the roles of OTs, and how schools, along with the teachers and administrators within them, can help supply teachers become included, participatory contributors to a school's culture, pedagogical practices, and curriculum. My vignettes will act as signposts for my

arguments to help crystallize and concretize my implications. Although the data and the results are not empirical, they are wholly genuine and may be of value to future research.

CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

In this chapter, I realize the autoethnographic component of this project by foregrounding my personal practice and presenting noteworthy teaching experiences in the form of vignettes that capture the productive intersection of critical pedagogy and occasional teaching. Each vignette is, essentially, an educative snapshot of the potentiality and value of substitute teaching. In addition to contributing creative content, I reflect critically on my own performance as an OT in an effort to forge a discussion of ongoing major themes and challenges for supply teachers, particularly in Ontario. Informed by current, relevant literature on occasional teaching, I approach my vignettes with an analytic degree of self-reflexivity to interact with, deconstruct, and provide commentary on my own development of positive instructional practices that enrich both learning and teaching.

From the Field: Vignettes

Recently, in a secondary school, a class of students was given the entire period to finish a visual and textual rendering detailing the formative events which have inspired—and continue to shape—one's circumstances and choices. The lesson outline explained that the students would be given the whole period to continue working on the personal piece. The assignment itself, though a relatively traditional task that I completed myself as a young student, is still, to some degree, a source of self-reflection that affords students the opportunity to consider the deciding events or experiences in their own lives. The task, then, was indeed pedagogically sound and, to me, welcomed the chance to ask students what sorts of occasions or moments they were including in their lifelong narrative. However, for substitute teachers, what is as much of a reward as it is a challenge is the work period itself: a full, 76-minute block (or 42 minutes for elementary schools), which, in addition to presenting certain obstacles for classroom management

(Glatfelter, 2006), gives OTs a choice: to sit comfortably at the regular teacher's desk and supervise, or to get up, walk around the classroom, ask thought-provoking questions, and actually, well, teach. Since the lesson planned offered no suggestions regarding what the students could work on if and when they were to complete their assignment, I had assumed that the project would require the period, in its entirety, to perfect. Because I was, at that time, overwhelmed by my own graduate courses, I must admit that the thought of sitting in the teacher's comfortable chair, logging on to her computer, and working alongside the students had definitely crossed my mind. After all, I was a student myself.

Indeed, I could have paid attention to my own studies, gotten paid to glance, occasionally, at my students to ensure that they were seated and at least appearing as though they were working busily, but I decided to resist the temptation and assume the roles and responsibilities of a twenty-century substitute teacher—one who is educated, certified, and both prepared and willing to teach with passion, even if that teaching occurs on a non-permanent basis. I admit that, especially at the secondary school level, where students, for the most part, are able to work independently, there is great temptation to neglect one's teaching duties and simply keep to oneself. Many OTs, myself included, have counted down the minutes of a period and not taken seriously our roles as trained educators and caregivers because our students, in effect, are not *our* students. But does having one's name above the students' names on an attendance list make one any more of a teacher? Surely, the designation of "homeroom teacher," I am sure, is an empowering source of validation, pride, and membership into a community of practice, but it is important to understand that, as OTs, we are, in many ways, even more valuable than homeroom teachers. We may not have a classroom which boasts our name on its door but, when we walk into any classroom, our attitude, intent, and expert teaching make it our own. We may not check

off the same students' names each morning as part of the attendance log, but we need to understand that every student within a district school board is, unequivocally, our student. An OT's quality of instruction is a reflection of his or her devotion not only to a school or its board, but to the profession and, most importantly, its students, as well.

Though my mobility in the classroom was somewhat challenged due to the large amount of students and desks, after I had introduced myself to the class, taken attendance, and explained to the students what they were expected to accomplish throughout the period, I began, to circulate around the room. Rather than simply strolling in front of students to assert my authority and establish myself as the teacher, I knelt down beside each of them so that we could, together, be on the same visual level. Though the gesture may seem minute and unnecessary, hooks (1994) suggests that an educator should make every effort to appear to his or her students as a teacher and not a dictator (p. 18). The lowered position, then, is the first step in cultivating a safe space where students and teachers are partners in the learning process which shares authority (Thayer-Bacon, 2006). Showing genuine interest in my students and their road maps, I asked all of them, "What's your name?" and "What do you have on your road map?" The questions came as quite a shock to the grade nine class, whose quiet students seemed legitimately surprised by the attention that I, as a supply teacher, was giving to them. A central tenet of critical, engaged pedagogy, hooks (1994) argues, is a teacher's consistent integration—and appreciation—of students' voices, expressions, and lived experiences (pp. 20-21). Since, regrettably, I tend to forget the names of my students after reading through the attendance list, I prioritize relearning my students' names during the lesson to generate a dialogue that values students' identities and recognizes their place in the classroom. This emancipatory and empowering tactic encourages students to trust the teacher and take risks.

While teachers are often motivated or reminded to make their classroom a “safe space,” a space is not safe, I argue, until students feel safe and comfortable learning within it. Risk-taking, then, is not the objective of students, exclusively; teachers, too, should be active participants in the risk-taking process to model vulnerability and learning. When I asked students about their work, I took interest in them as students and as individuals in a supportive environment. My goal, when asking students to share their stories, was not to pry or to engage in voyeurism but, rather, to make connections with them, learn about and from my students, and actually use my teaching time in a meaningful, productive manner. Education is the “practice of freedom” when students are not the only ones who are asked to share personal information (hooks, 1994, p .21). A classroom, whether led by a full-time or part-time teacher, should be a place of mutual precarity wherein knowledge is co-constructed. Luckily, each of the students with whom I interacted was willing to impart his or her lived curricula in an admirable display of trust. Had a student not been as eager, however, as a substitute teacher, I would have quite simply respected this student’s wishes and granted him or her the private space in which to work uninterrupted. What I gained from my brief exchanges with my students was the chance to discuss commonalities or difference in our life histories, to engage with learners on a profounder level that enables them to see value in their work, and in themselves.

As a substitute teacher, one’s connections with students, although brief, do not have to be short-lived or transient; the knowledge we develop and propagate and the lessons we learn, both as students and teachers, have the capacity to be lasting, formative, and, in the case of one pupil, transformative. While walking around the room and asking thoughtful questions about the content of my students’ road maps, I came across one student whose map included an image of a hockey player. A former competitor myself with a vested interest in the iconic sport, I aimed to

integrate my own passion to build a rapport with this male student, if only temporarily. When I asked him, “What type of hockey do you play?” the student, perplexed, replied, “What do you mean? There’s only one type of hockey.” Smiling, I assured him, “Well, actually, we have field, ball, road, and ice hockey. So, which do you play?” The student, visibly unimpressed with my answer, remarked, “Come on, man. I’m a dude. I only play ice hockey. It’s a guy’s sport.” As opposed to immediately correcting the student and catalyzing an antagonistic debate, I engaged, calmly, in a meaningful, open dialogue, a useful discussion with the student and his many eavesdropping classmates that, informed by feminist thinking, shed light on notions of gender performativity, patriarchy, societal (mis)conceptions of the link between sport and gender, hypermasculinity, and the potential dangers of heteronormativity. Certainly, on paper, the formal and academic terminology makes it seem as though I had done a great deal with the students but, in reality, a few, simple and probing questions that prompted self-reflection were enough to get the students thinking differently about the topic.

Each question was more profound and more challenging than the one which preceded it. I began with, “Are sports inherently gendered?” and followed with “What, exactly, makes a *guy*’s sport?” The open-ended questions enabled a discussion about professional sports organizations, so I asked, “Why do men’s sports teams get more coverage than women’s teams on television? What are some of the broader implications of looking at sports as exclusive, gendered activities? What aspects of hockey—or of hockey players—make it a *guy*’s sport?” The student, naturally, was not immediately ready to surrender his understanding of sport; he resisted, defending his notions. “The sport is a guy’s sport because it’s physical. It’s violent. It requires a lot of effort. Girls wouldn’t be able to keep up. You’re not a man if you play the other types of hockey.” This tension, this conflict of perspectives and beliefs, is exactly what made our dialogue engaging,

formative and productive. Although the notion that masculinity is fluid and socially constructed is, for most teachers, not an emergent or groundbreaking conceptualization, for a grade nine student, it might be. As teachers, we may often forget how impressionable our students are, regardless of their age or grade level. I concluded our conversation by examining how societal perceptions of masculinity perpetuated by media outlets and popular culture tend to gender activities and roles outside of sports. My purpose was not to “break” this particular student but, rather, to educate him, to introduce him to new and challenging outlooks on a topic that he may not have been previously explored in a critical manner.

Shortly before the bell rang to end the period, the student, on his way out of the classroom, turned to me and revealed, “You’re right, you know? Nobody’s ever told me those things before. Not like that. Thank you.” What is important here is not necessarily what was said, but that it was, indeed, said. Whether I altered, permanently, the student’s mentality or understanding remains a mystery to me. Perhaps we will meet again. Perhaps we will not. That the student thought to take the time to thank me, however, showed me that he did, in fact, understand that over the course of the period, he did learn a valuable lesson directly related to his task and connected closely to a broader understanding of society and culture. In this case, I took advantage of a teachable moment—but only because I, myself, had created it. By asking questions, by showing interest in my students and evoking a humanizing pedagogy that prizes, truly, the experiences, thoughts, and emotions of learners (Darder et al., 2009, p. 338), I was able to advance learning and promote a profounder kind of knowledge. For substitute teachers, infusing critical pedagogy into their instruction is not about forcing a meaningful lesson but, rather, by following, adapting, and expanding lesson plans, about fostering and facilitating it. As an OT, it is possible to get students learning, and feel good doing it.

Occasional teaching often challenges educators to find a delicate balance in focus between classroom management and instruction. When the two coincide, however, and inform one another, there is potential for productive learning. When, a few weeks into my occasional teaching career, my entire second-period English class had not shown up to class, I started to worry. Was I not in the correct location? Had I somehow misread the teacher's schedule and already missed my class? Was there supposed to be another appended page in the teacher's folder explaining the situation? As the teachers beside and across from my classroom closed their doors and begun their lessons, I read, once again, the teacher's plans and noticed that the students were going to be working on an independent study in the library. On a hunch, I gathered my belongings, exited the room, and paced toward the library where, inside, I found my students already logged onto the computers. While it would have been useful for the regular teacher to advise me that the students would report to the library, rather than their classroom, I was elated to find the group of grade ten students for whom I would be responsible over the next 70 minutes. After introducing myself and taking attendance, I reminded my students that they would have the rest of the period to use the school's computers or their laptops to conduct research and gather information for their task. This, of course, was the elaborated version of the teacher's own instructions which had been left for me: "Period 2: ISU."

After conversing with the students to discover what exactly the ISU entailed, I learned that they had been reading a novel about the Holocaust and were responsible, in part, for reading about and creating a report on the genocide. With this information, the students would then need to create, whether digitally or by hand, a new cover for the text. The assignment itself, then, was rife with potential, and allowed for opportunity to discuss contested sociocultural issues, including prejudice, racism, oppression, and genocide. Despite the richness of the topic itself,

many learners stared at their blank screens looking for inspiration. Rather than provide some ideas immediately, I gave students a few minutes to collect their thoughts and work through their block so that they could, organically and independently, produce their own work. While the students were engaging in a brainstorming session, I took the liberty of borrowing a student's book. I read through a few passages and, instantly, was captured by the author's writing style. After hearing many students admit, "I don't know what to do" and "I don't know what to put on this book cover," I decided to intervene and draw from my personal experience of having visited a concentration camp a couple years ago. Sandlin, Wright, and Clark (2011), citing Ellsworth, argue that, oftentimes, a learning experience cannot be fully grasped because of its magnitude and complexity (p. 16). An event like the Holocaust, for instance, is so unnerving and inhumane that its educative value, arguably, rests in its inability to not be mastered or wholly understood. Since the text itself does not have pictures, some students, in my tutoring and teaching experience, have difficulty using the typed content of the book, despite its vividness, to imagine and visualize the tragedies of the storied, global event.

To get students started, then, I logged onto a computer and, with the help of the librarian, connected the device to the LCD projector above us so that I may search for and share appropriate images. I used Google to bring up pictures of Dachau: the first Nazi concentration camp built in Germany, located in Bavaria, just outside of Munich. While flipping through images provided by the official Dachau website, I narrated my own experiences of having visited the camp. I revealed to my students that I had an emotional breakdown when I stepped into the gas chamber, knowing that tens of thousands of people had been murdered therein. The students, while listening to my stories and viewing the images, were silent and attentive. My experience, evidently, incited a few questions from the group, which I gladly addressed because they were

connected, closely, to the lesson at hand. After having viewed several images, including an overhead view of the compound itself, I invited students to close their eyes. Picking up the book which I had borrowed, I turned to a page which I had bookmarked a few minutes before. I asked students to, while listening to me speak, try to connect the author's words to the images we had seen, to try situate the passage in a concentration camp. After having read a short, descriptive passage, I asked my students to, once again, open their eyes and, without hesitation, type or write their immediate reactions to what they had just seen, heard, and felt. Many students recorded key words like "darkness," "loss," "caged," "fear," and "frozen." I then told students that the book cover itself should work to elicit these same reactions so as to both preface and echo the content on the pages that follow it. I asked students to use their bank of key terms as a source of inspiration, a strong foundation upon which they may generate concrete and abstract images that capture, artistically, their own responses to the activity.

My sole regret from the lesson was that I did not, with my students' permission, take any pictures of the work that they would create in the next hour. The students, even those who thought themselves incapable of completing the assignment, were able to produce unique and meaningful cover that spoke to their subjectivity as learners. While, understandably, not every supply teacher will, like me, have gone to a concentration camp, what is important to understand, here, is that the motivation to pursue a quality learning experience resulted in students exceeding their own expectations. Another substitute teacher could have shown images from another camp, even if it had been one which they had not visited. It can be debated that I deviated from the original lesson plan by actually teaching the students, but my decision to do so, I think, resulted in an enriching activity. While comprehensive lesson plans from permanent teachers are encouraged and ideal, OTs can take comfort in knowing that a plan's lack of detail, though often

frustrating, presents the opportunity for flexibility, autonomy, and use of one's creative license. Although the work that the students produced was remarkable, their efforts to do so were less than appropriate.

The students arrived to the school's library prepared with their texts and notes but, as any supply teacher could confirm, whenever students are using computers, there is always increased risk of unsuitable behaviour. While the students were working, I noticed that a few had Facebook tabs open or were browsing various classifieds sections on Kijiji. Naturally, I reminded them to remain on task and use their time effectively. Some students, however, did not consider my advice, and continued abusing their access to the Internet to satisfy a non-academic purpose. An increasingly popular secondary school trend, I soon discovered, was the use of a popular website which invites users to browse, choose from, and share thousands of recorded prank calls. While the students, evidently, found the webpage's collection of prank calls humorous, they were even more intrigued by their ability to make two, free prank calls daily through the website. Some students, then, rather than researching the horrific historical events of WWII, were busy utilizing prank call templates and dialing the numbers of residents living in their local region. Addressing the handful of male students who, unfortunately, were not focusing on their task, I asked, "After having just learned about the Holocaust, about the millions of innocent people who were killed at the hands of hatred and prejudice, do you think, honestly, that prank dialing people is respectful? Aside from prank dialing itself—which, by the way, can be easily tracked and connected to you since you are logged into the computer with your student username and password—do you think that your behaviour, your utter disregard for the seriousness and gravity of this task, is acceptable? How can you make better decisions moving forward?" With these questions, the

students, starting to understand the impact of their actions, agreed to stop using the website and return to their ISU.

Rather than dismissing the students immediately, however, I engaged in an open dialogue with them to ensure that such behaviour could be curbed or wholly prevented in the future. After a few minutes of discussion, which sought to answer the questions above through self-reflection, the students returned to their seats and worked, silently, for the rest of the period. While my goal, here, was to manage the classroom, evoking critical pedagogy, I wanted to halt any behaviour that did not consider, with thoughtfulness, the events of the Holocaust. I explained to my students that, in denying the deceased the respect and dignity they deserve by prank dialing unsuspecting victims, not only were they preying on the vulnerability and innocence of their local residents, but they were also undermining and continuing to oppress the lives of the millions of people who died as a result of the events about which the book's author himself writes. Towards the end of the period, while I was helping a student with the composition of the book cover, one of the students with whom I spoken earlier tapped me on the shoulder. "Mr. A, can I talk to you when you're done?" I nodded and, after finishing with the composition, turned around to give the student my full attention. "I just want to apologize for earlier. I'm not that type of person. I mean, I'm a good person and I take this topic seriously. I was just being stupid with my friends. I don't want you to be mad at me or to think that I'm disrespectful. I know I shouldn't have been prank calling. I really don't want to get into trouble either with the police, our teacher, or the principal."

The student's honesty and openness were truly admirable. I assured the student that I was impressed by his courage and accountability, and would not need to report him because the issue was resolved in class. I reminded him, however, that breaking from oppression and cultivating an

environment of inclusiveness, acceptance, and respect demands much more than doing no harm; it also demands doing good. I encouraged the student to become a leader among his peers, to put a stop to poor behaviour when he sees it, and to motivate his friends to make sound decisions, both within and outside of school. Appreciative, the student nodded, shook my hand, and gathered his books before the dismissal bell rang. When the students vacated the library, I remained in it for a few minutes. I recall, vividly, taking out my cell phone and texting my partner, Victoria: “Honest to God, sometimes being a supply teacher is so awesome. I just had a breakthrough with a student. I’m still shaking.” I tried to mask my emotions while speaking to the student but, in truth, I was in awe by the power of words and, more importantly, how the conduct, instruction, and disciplinary approaches of an individual supply teacher could have a tangible, positive impact on at least one student. Through occasional teaching, our lessons may not reach every student, every day. But it is important that we continue attempting to connect with as many students as possible to provide value not only to our practices, but to the learning—and living—experiences of our students, too.

As I have argued throughout this document, though it is true full, detailed lesson plans are beneficial, they may not always be made available for substitute teachers. Included in the lesson plan, moreover, should be the enough handouts or worksheets for every student in a class. While such an expectation is ideal, unfortunately, it is not routine. Recently, I was called to teach, over a two-day block, a set of construction classes in which, admittedly, I have a very partial professional background. After asking a second teacher to open the classroom door for me (the first teacher, as it turned out, did not have a key either), I entered a dark, large room that smelled of fresh varnish and wood. Upon entering the class, I noticed, resting atop the teacher’s desk, blanketed in inches of sawdust, the teacher’s substitute teacher folder, in which I would

find the day's lesson plan and resources. After reading over the instructions and briefly studying the students' names prior to the morning's first bell, I welcomed my first group of students who were rather bemused and amused to find a young, substitute teacher wearing a tie and a blazer in a construction workshop. Naturally, I introduced myself and explained to the students, as per their teacher's instructions, that, rather than engaging in live work, we would be heading down to the school's computer lab to complete a couple of tasks. When my two dozen students and I arrived at the lab, I pulled out my folder and began to distribute the students' worksheets. It was then that I realized I was about a dozen short. Even had I known where, exactly, the photocopy machine was located within the school, I knew that I would not have a code to use it. Faced with the dilemma of asking a teacher across the hall to momentarily watch over my class while I tried to, somehow, duplicate the worksheets, I decided, instead, to ask students to partner and share a sheet. An easy solution without issue. Or so I thought.

On each sheet, students found several, small images of safety and construction products. The task itself seemed to have some value. I could see, if I squinted, an earnest attempt to integrate financial literacy and the effort to educate students not on mandatory safety equipment and on the price of necessary construction tools, as well. The problem, however, came from the voice of a student who, unreservedly, announced, "We've done this same worksheet like four times. Every time our teacher is away, he gives us the same worksheet. I'm not doing it again. Look, I have the answers saved right here on my computer. Here." Following the student's lead, I approached his computer and, sure enough, on the monitor, found a complete version of the worksheet. I turned to the rest of the class and asked them, by show of hands, to demonstrate who had, in a previous class, already completed the task. All but two had their palms reaching for the ceiling. Since I was once, myself, a student eager to escape doing busy work, I made sure

to check, briefly, everyone's file and to my surprise each student had, indeed, already finished the task. We had only been in class for ten minutes and, with a room full of students staring at me for direction, I needed to act.

The teacher, who had throughout the month been away for coaching purposes, inputted his absence in the automated call system over a week in advance, so I was quite shocked to find that his students had not received any new work. Rather than give the students a “free” period in which they could surf the web, play games, or text their classmates, I decided to challenge them, to expand their understanding and apply their knowledge in a way that would make the task itself meaningful and relevant. The feat, obviously, was a difficult one, and would be for any substitute teacher: the students, already irritated that they were asked to complete the same task on several occasions and expecting a consequential free period, were not immediately swayed when I pitched the idea of doing even more work. However, I needed to engage my students, to give them some sort of tangible and beneficial learning experience that, beyond lasting the rest of the period, could actually assist in the development of enduring skills and attitudes. I explained to my students that, because I spend far too much time looking at homes for sale, visiting garage sales and flea markets, scouring the Internet for antique products and repurposed furniture, and watching an abundance of television shows centered on restoring homes, I have an informed awareness of current, popular trends in small-scale construction endeavours. I strengthened my knowledge by explaining that my own friends, who had taken construction courses in high school and graduated from construction programmes at the college level, had started their own businesses flipping houses or rejuvenating old, used furniture in what is a rapidly growing and competitive industry, particularly in Ontario.

To contextualize my lesson—which I was still developing in my head as I spoke with my

students as part of reflection-*in-action* (Parsons, Dodman, & Burrowbridge, 2013)—I referenced a recent article that discussed the evolving nature of southern Ontario's real estate market, which continues to surge because of out-of-region buyers, thus prompting more demand for small-scale construction specializations, including home renovations and retrofitting and, to satisfy a niche need, furniture reclamation. Together, we discussed TV shows, like *Love it or List it*, *Property Brothers*, *Fixer Upper*, *Flip or Flop*, and *Design on a Dime* among the long list of productions aimed at expanding a developing trade and educating their viewership. In talking to my students, it became clear, based on their participation in the dialogue, that they were both familiar with and interested in these shows and their subject matter. Accordingly, to actually use the worksheets they had already completed and develop a short project which would closely align with the course's expectations, I invited students to pick a partner and identify a business that they would, theoretically, imagine themselves starting after graduating with a degree in construction. I provided a list of potential businesses, including home builders, home renovators, designers, and furniture crafters, from which they could choose, but I also reminded students that they were free to select whatever business they felt passionate about pursuing, at least for the next 60 minutes. I then asked students that, in addition to providing a name for their new business, they would need to compare their findings from their worksheet activity with their partner and, together, establish: which construction and safety products would be necessary to start and sustain the business, what the better price deal for the items is, which items are of higher quality, based on consumer reviews, and where the items could be purchased. The catch? Students had a fictive business start-up grant.

It would, of course, have been too easy to allow students an unlimited budget. As a result, trying to maintain what I believed was the main, implicit learning goal in the original worksheet,

I integrated financial literacy in a manner that would challenge students to synthesize information, conduct further research, build upon and expand previous knowledge, make connections to real-world contexts and markets, balance a budget effectively, collaborate well with a business partner, compare prices, practice literacy skills by reading and analyzing reputable product reviews, and, perhaps most importantly, apply their understandings in a creative, imaginative way that some sort of practicality and criticality. The students, luckily, were quite pleased with the impromptu lesson and, to my pleasant surprise, got to work quickly. Throughout the rest of the period, they remained focused, attentive, and participative. I circulated around the room constantly, asking my students questions and monitoring their progress. It was rewarding, for me, to see students actually taking initiative and demonstrating interest in their work. Knowing that I would have a full period with the same group of students the following day, while they were busy mapping out their businesses, I had already planned for the pairs to present their findings and justify their reasoning behind the business's decisions. Working with budget of \$5,000, my students needed to consider what sort of equipment, for building and safety, would be essential to the success of the start-up.

That morning, I did not have the Ontario Technological Education curriculum in my hand but, rather than simply giving my students over an hour to do nothing, I encouraged them to think about and produce something of value. The next day's presentations, which were strictly informal, were insightful and successful. They gave students yet another opportunity to apply their previous understandings and share their learning with their classmates. The repurposed task, a mini-project too fitting for a lesson on retrofitting and renovation, demonstrated the initial steps and stages of a grander, project-based learning assessment (Drake et., 2014) and captured, astoundingly, what both students, and their supplies, are capable of creating and achieving in a

limited time period, with little planning or direction. Though OTs may not always be able to create a daily curriculum, they are continually encouraged to seek opportunities to adapt and enrich daily lesson plans—the blueprints of a project—in an effort to make them more relevant and critical to students’ learning.

Substitute teachers can infuse critical pedagogy in their instruction by asking students why what they are working on is valuable to them. Any activity or task typically reserved for OTs, like having students watch a movie, complete a verb conjugation worksheet, or write a reflection, can be made beneficial for students, if explored in a critical manner. Students, Glatfelter (2006) notes, should be taught to compare, question, synthesize, connect, and generalize. They should, in other words, be involved in higher order thinking skills; not simply memorization of facts in isolation (pp. 26-27). Though OTs are obligated to closely follow a teacher’s lesson plan, elements of the plan itself can be enriched through questioning the importance and validity of the lesson’s content. Substitute teachers can pose higher order thinking questions which both check for and challenge students’ understanding (Glatfelter, 2006, p. 20). Doing so, Glatfelter (2006) argues, would enable students to engage in metacognition and assessment as learning, whereby they, themselves, begin to question—hopefully with consistency—the worth and significance of what they are learning in an effort to further enrich thought, performance, and critical literacy. By considering how they are learning, and what they are learning, students—and their OTs—will be able to see busy work not as a waste of time, but as the foundation, the bare bones of learning that, through critical pedagogy, can be strengthened and emboldened to facilitate students’ critical knowledge, skills, and beliefs.

Major Themes and Challenges

When thinking about what kind of difficulties daily substitute teachers encounter aside

from classroom management that affect, negatively, their performance and effectiveness as trained and certified educators, Lave and Wenger's (1991) model of legitimate peripheral participation is still an appropriate and necessary framework through which to explore the marginality of supply teachers. That is, the inability to belong to and participate within the relatively exclusive educational community of practice significantly hampers opportunities for one's professional and personal development. Rather than becoming a permanent member of a school, an OT, due to his or her nomadism, continues to perform his or her duties on the undervalued fringes of education. Through his study involving substitute teachers, permanent teachers, and administrators, Tippetts (2002) found that despite after-school meetings designed specifically to increase communication and planning between the stakeholders within a school, supply teachers, perhaps because of their own insecurities and internalization of marginality, participated significantly less throughout the course of the meetings (p. 76). Tippetts suggests that supply teachers continue to be perceived as secondary or tertiary players in the educational community, not only by permanent teachers and their administrators, but by themselves, as well. Tippetts adds that part-time teachers, often deskilled in their practice, exist outside the normal instructional administration of schools (p. 76). If the goal of communication between OTs and their full-time counterparts is to integrate substitutes into the school system and culture, in addition to encouraging absent teachers to create and leave critical, comprehensive lesson plans, then, for Tippetts (2002), there is still much more to be done (p. 77).

Such a comment, however, should not be preclusive or discouraging; it should, conversely, challenge OTs, both within and outside of Ontario, to continue seeking opportunities to contribute positively and meaningfully to a school's culture. However, rather than associating permanence of one's employment to the possible level of in-school contribution, substitute

teachers should seek to view their instructional practice, informed by the teachings of critical pedagogy, as a legitimate form of participation that adds value to a school by enriching the learning experiences of students. As Driedger-Enns (2014) contends, moving forward, occasional teaching should—and must—be perceived as essential and demanding intellectual work; substitute teachers should no longer base their instructional potentiality on their degree of employment within a school and, instead, should view every opportunity to teach within any classroom or school as one of promise and importance. In writing this, I am aware that my optimism may seem, for some, too idealistic and that one's job security, in many ways, dictates one's motivation to engage in worthwhile and beneficial practice.

I wholly understand that one's rate of pay as a substitute teacher does not change when, as opposed to sitting at a teacher's desk, one actually teaches in an engaging, critical manner. But, rather than guilt readers into wanting to perform well for the sake of their students, I must remind OTs, including myself, to approach each day and each classroom as a permanent teacher because one's value to a school, its students, and even to oneself, is not indicated by the amount of years spent at a single school but, rather, by the amount of focus, dedication, and attention we put into each of our lessons. If we want to be archetypal *good* teachers, then we should find ways to assert ourselves, to stand out, within a community of practice through our instruction and pedagogy. We know that the work is difficult, that the process of waiting for a phone call which may never come is frustrating, and that our line of work is increasingly precarious, but rather than complain or give up, should we not channel our concerns productively so as to challenge and improve our situations?

Wertz (2006) argues that, based on the treatment of substitute teachers today, it is not vital or OTs to have any teaching abilities or qualifications because they are rarely asked to use

them (p. 20). Speaking openly to permanent teachers disappointed that their replacements did not know how to instruct the material accurately, Wertz asks, “What about all the times you had substitutes who were effective, who followed your lesson plans, and who actually *taught* your students?” (p. 20). While Wertz acknowledges that there are some supply teachers who, viewing the job as a quick way to make money while reading the newspaper, have tarnished the reputation for others who actually want to teach students, to roll up their sleeves and work with children and teenagers (p. 21). What is needed, then, is the opportunity to do so; teachers are encouraged to put their trust in OTs, to believe that they are capable of doing more than turning on the DVD player and turning off the lights. It is disappointing, sometimes, when I enter a classroom and, on the teacher’s desk, find a lesson plan with only one line. No objectives, no instructions, no learning goals. It is often frustrating knowing that, despite having four university degrees and several AQs, I am relegated to distributing and collecting colouring sheets. Such dissatisfaction, however, should not be cause for conformity or subscription to dated and uncritical practices; they are, instead, calls for change.

While I have suggested, herein, that substitute teachers should rely on their instructional capacities and freedoms as a means to participate within and belong to a community of practice, I would be remiss if I did not remind readers and OTs that there is danger in simply embracing the limitations and marginalization of supply teaching. As Weems (2003), echoing Foucault, explains, claiming empowerment via one’s identification with or ownership of one’s presumed deviance or outsideness can serve to reinforce essentialism and normalizing classifications between what is a desired, accepted norm and, in turn, what is inferior or unwanted (p. 261). That is, if OTs begin to claim that their liminality affords them unparalleled agency and that they truly content with how substitute teachers are treated, then they endorse the current system of

education which delimits the potential of substitute teachers, reduces their role and functionality, and excludes them from professional development opportunities, without ever challenging it with hopes of ameliorating it. Surely, OTs can—and are encouraged—to find resistance, liberation, and empowerment in their daily work to make it more meaningful, but locating potential in one's practices does not amount to a need to settle and accept without continued critique and questioning. To do so would be to undercut the intentions and concerns of “third-class citizens” marginalized in the school contexts within which they serve (Weems, 2006, p. 260). Since substitute teachers are commonly classified as incompetent and unqualified, deviant outsiders, and guerilla superheroes in media and popular culture (Weems, 2006, p. 254), it is important to recognize, address, and understand one's marginal position without succumbing to a marginal role. The stereotypical representations of OTs highlight a disjunction between the kinds of pedagogical authority that are considered desirable in various classroom contexts (p. 263). Accordingly, through critical pedagogy, OTs can appear both within and outside of schools as competent, certified instructors who dissolve the binary of “real” and “substitute” teacher not to be guerilla educators or superheroes but, rather, to be simply *teachers*.

In his study, Glatfelter (2006) found that some teachers are vehemently opposed to OTs like Wertz (2006), with whose opinions I align myself. Writing of one specific teacher who openly dismisses OTs actually wanting to teach, Glatfelter notes what he describes is a minority opinion:

I get irritated when you get overzealous kind of substitute teachers, where they like really want to teach and do all this stuff, and they're upset that you left simple lesson plans for them to follow. And so that kind of irritates me, because I'm like, “You're just here for a day, and they're not going to learn. They're going to choose not to learn from you. Not

because of who you are, but just because it's a free day for them." (p. 78)

Even if this participant's opinion represents the minority of educators, it highlights the dangers of such a pronounced rhetoric that demeans the role of substitute teachers and precludes the chances of students learning from someone other than the homeroom teacher. The participant's irritation, I argue, may stem from her inability to negotiate authority and knowledge with other educators. As opposed to being flattered or impressed that an OT, without knowing the routines of a classroom, is still eager to teach a full lesson, this middle school teacher is annoyed. Her speculation that the students will "choose" not to learn from the substitute teacher assumes that the students can and will learn only from her. The "free day" logic is exactly the impediment to learning against which OTs must work on a daily basis. Such a rationale, though, is learned by students and, as such, can be unlearned if the homeroom teacher cultivates an accepting, inclusive environment in which all educators are welcome. The suggestion that OTs, in one day, cannot make enough of an impact on students to get them to learn is defeating but it acts equally as an invitation to disprove the logic of teachers who, like this participant, have little faith in the work of OTs. Though this example, I realize, is an extreme one, I have chosen it purposely to illustrate what substitute teachers may be up against in schools, and what kind of harmful attitudes imbue the classes in which they enter. Some teachers might believe that impermanence is an indication of incompetence or incapability.

Occasional teaching has, and will continue to have, its standard challenges: behaviour and classroom management, lack of lesson plans, resources, and information, inability to fully belong to a school community, inability to access professional development opportunities, insecurity with regard to when and where one will work, lack of full-time benefits coverage, lack of established, ongoing partnerships with faculty members, and an inability to monitor the

development of one's students over an academic term of year (Jenkins, Smith, & Maxwell, 2009). This list, however, is not at all comprehensive; substitute teachers will encounter ongoing obstacles and face difficulty in their practice regardless of one's level of experience or previous training. Finding a key to use a washroom, for instance, or not knowing where to bring one's students during a fire drill are other, equally as common hurdles. However, what is, for me, one of the more pressing problems is one's own attitude and mentality about supply teaching. The "here today, gone tomorrow" mentality is, arguably, a basis for the perpetuation of one's isolation and alienation within a school community. It is, in other words, a potentially damaging excuse which condones a substitute teacher's lack of quality instruction. The common perception that, after the school dismissal bell rings, OTs will no longer need to care about students because they are "not their problem anymore" is crippling both to individual substitute teachers, and to the field of occasional teaching as a whole. What critical pedagogy can offer, then, is the understanding that a teacher's instruction, presence, attitudes, and remarks may last lasting impressions on the students who witness and absorb them. For me, more than simply an educational strategy or philosophy, critical pedagogy is a state of mind, a personal belief that motivates one to strive for excellence in every teaching capacity because to do less is to cause a disservice—a social injustice—both to one's students, and to oneself as a formal educator.

What continues to remain my own greatest obstacle is motivation. Though I know that the work that I do is meaningful and helps students on a daily basis, it is discouraging to learn about the OCT's projections for the teaching landscape in Ontario. I have come to appreciate and to truly like occasional teaching, but I know that it will be increasingly difficult for me to continue as an OT for many years, as some of my colleagues have done. I had lunch recently with a fellow OT who, upon sitting down, introduced himself to me by shaking my hand. I

smiled and said, “I know who you are. We’ve met a couple of times. You were my supply teacher when I was in elementary school. I remember you.” The teacher, now in his fourteenth consecutive year of supply teaching, seemed shocked when I recounted stories of him in my own classroom. Perhaps he did not want to believe that it had been that long since he was hired as an OT. In what seemed, to me, a state of disbelief, this teacher, shaking his head slowly, whispered, “Wow. Yeah, I can’t believe it’s been that long already.” Worried about my own fate as an OT, I asked this teacher if he had intentions of being a full-time substitute teacher, or whether he was actively seeking out permanent positions. I was hoping for the former, but knew it was the latter. He informed me that, while he has had a couple of LTO posts in the last decade, no permanent positions have been made available for him.

Though this teacher's case is also an extreme, I personally know of several OTs who have been supply teaching on a day-to-day basis for over seven years, still hoping that a full-time spot may open for them. Others, tired of waiting and feeling the effects of attrition, have since left the profession and entered other fields. I value occasional teaching; I am proud to be an OT, and am grateful for the opportunity to be one. However, I am at a time in my life when my friends and colleagues are buying their first homes and cars, backpacking throughout Europe, getting married, and even having children. I understand that each person’s narrative is different and that, in time, I too will reach such milestones but, given my precarious employment, I continue to question when. I am not envious of the accomplishments of others, but being on the cusp of completing a second graduate degree and beginning doctoral studies later on this year, I must admit that I am worried. Will I still be a daily substitute teacher with two Master’s degrees and a PhD? Will I be called a “doctor” in some academic circles, and then have to press “resume” on the DVD player in others?

While my situation is perhaps more unique than that of others, the fear of not knowing, the insecurity, and the precarity of waiting by the phone to learn if I will have a job tomorrow so that I can pay my bills are common qualities shared by most OTs. I have often doubted whether I have made the correct decision by trying to secure a job in education, but when I enter a classroom and have the opportunity to interact with students, I know that I have. I know that when I see a student learn a new idea or concept—when he or she finally gets it—I am in the right place. However, I express these honest, raw feelings less than a year into my occasional teaching career. What will I think a decade from now? Will critical pedagogy still provide me with the answers to making my practices more meaningful? I know that, if and when I do find permanent work, my own supplies will get what they have worked for and deserve. In the meantime, though, the perseverance—the motivation—to walk into different classrooms every day with the same set of concerns is the key.

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, AND IMPLICATIONS

In this chapter, I summarize the design and findings of my autoethnography in a manner that leads to a discussion, and implications for both practice and future research within the field of occasional teaching. In this section, I continue to underscore the potential for valuable instruction amongst supply teachers, and address critical questions which arise as a result of my investigation.

Summary of the Study

In this project, I have in part examined my own lived experiences as a substitute teacher working in a school board to illuminate the potentiality for sound, pedagogical instruction in the increasingly precarious field of occasional teaching. By employing both a conceptual framework and a blended autoethnography, I have, throughout this document, aimed to present the difficult barriers to entry that continue to hinder the full participation of substitute teachers, both within and outside of Ontario. Through the theoretical lenses of legitimate peripheral participation and critical pedagogy, I have questioned how schools might become more inclusive for supply teachers, what challenges, beyond classroom management, continue to impact, negatively, the efficacy of OTs, what role substitute teachers play in shaping and applying critical pedagogy across K-12 learning, and how OTs, overall, can work to make their experiences more meaningful and rewarding for both themselves and their students through their instructional practices. While I have drawn from my own experiences, I have also used numerous secondary resources, including reports, studies, guidebooks, textbooks, and recent articles, both scholarly and non-academic, to provide readers with a comprehensive, informed perspective on the contemporary landscape of supply teaching.

While I do not, herein, intend to solve the issues associated with occasional teaching, I do

wish to address and work through common difficulties with the hope of improving the quality of temporary teachers' instruction, and the environments in which they work on a day-to-day basis. My overarching objective is to explore how administrators, regular teachers, and non-permanent teachers can work, collectively, to approach occasional teaching with a renewed purpose which, as opposed to considering supplies as classroom managers or babysitters, affords OTs authority and credibility as certified, valued educators within the K-12 education system. Within this project, I have shed light on how communities of practice, including schools, school boards, and Faculty of Education and Teacher Education programs can better prepare, train, and support supply teachers before and during their practice. The data that I have collected and presented in a creative format through a series of vignettes do not focus on my experiences as a student but, rather, as a supply teacher. I have chosen to concentrate on a particular set of vignettes, which I believe best capture the work of critical, engaged pedagogies in practice. In true self-reflexive form, I have also taken part in a critical reflection of my classroom interactions and observations to preface my discussion.

Discussion

To disrupt the status quo, and to incite change on a systemic level, Freire (2000) suggests that meaningful transformation must come from within, from the “oppressed” themselves who, in the case of OTs, must work within the very same organization that they critique and disassemble (p. 45). Substitute teachers, however, must be prudent, for in their alienation, “the oppressed want at any cost to resemble the oppressors, to imitate them, to follow them” (p. 62). If supply teachers strive to become full-time educators, they should do so with the intent not to replicate disengaged and tired instructional models but, rather, to question and destabilize the antiquated, suppressive “banking method” of education (Shor, 1993, p. 24) which, in many

cases, continues to plague our publicly-funded schools. Teachers, both occasional and permanent, should seek to adopt the “new attitude” of education (Shor, 1993, p. 28), the process of which involves profound praxis: a nexus of action, activism, and serious, critical reflection (Freire, 2000, p. 65). Bascia, Carr-Harris, Fine-Meyer, and Zurzolo (2014), for instance, explore how some teachers at both the elementary and secondary levels have drawn extensively from their own life histories and lived curricula to secure the adequate resources and legitimacy to disseminate newly developed curriculum and policies, lobby for course acceptance by educational jurisdictions, and help cement course infrastructure, including reading materials and professional development events—all from a grassroots level (p. 228). Though such an endeavour is encouraging, as one of the study’s participants notes, “[i]f you don’t have a supportive administrator you’re screwed anyway” (p. 240). If a full-time, unionized teacher laments the lack of administrative support to establish a feminist, “Women’s Studies” course, what can be expected for substitutes, all of whom, according to Pollack (2010), are marginalized? (p. 3).

Administrators, including principals and vice-principals, then, play a rather important role in ensuring that supply teachers feel comfortable, included, and valued in all schools. Byer (2008) suggests that administrators should inform both permanent teachers and students that substitutes, too, “deserve respect and have authority” (p. 4). While Byer’s idea, coupled with his call for more seating charts and lesson plans (p. 4) are, to some degree, productive, they lack emphasis on what is arguably most important to a teacher’s daily practice teacher: instruction. Rather than just ask for lesson plans—which should, nowadays, certainly be mandatory—administrators and substitute teachers alike should seek to receive *meaningful* lesson plans from homeroom teachers (Pollack, 2010, p. 19) that extend beyond the bounds of “busywork” or

“seatwork” devoid of criticality. It is surprising that, despite early recommendations to increase communication between full-time and substitutes to develop more complete, concise agendas and plans (Recker, 1985), even after over 20 years, for an OT, a lesson plan—even an incomplete one—regrettably, is not always a guarantee.

Over the past ten months, there have been many occasions when, upon entering a teacher’s classroom, I was left without any plans to cover not just a single period, but a whole school day. Though, in some cases, a last-minute emergency may forgivably cause such a lack of preparation and communication, the incidence becomes increasingly problematic when considering that most of supply jobs are arranged, via an automated calling system, days—if not weeks—in advance (Gershenson, 2012). Hardman and Tippetts (2001) remind OTs, however, that even on days when a teacher’s absence is unplanned, they will still be able to focus not necessarily on subject matter but, rather, on the development of students’ skills, values, and beliefs (p. 23). Byer (2008) argues that administrators should work diligently to ensure that all stakeholders understand that supplies “work as professionally as professional teachers” (p. 4). Such seemingly simple comprehension is, however, difficult to crystallize for both part-time and permanent teachers particularly when an OT is given incomplete lesson plans, inadequate resources, including too few worksheets without access to a photocopier, or, perhaps worst yet, a set of questions or exercises which the students have already completed in the absence of their regular teacher—often on more than one occasion.

In addition to principals and vice-principals ensuring that comprehensive and meaningful lesson plans are created for substitute teachers, they are, O’Connor (2009) contends, encouraged to welcome substitute teachers into the school by greeting them by name at the front office, giving a tour of the school if necessary, asking if the teacher would need any additional

resources, and, when possible, visiting the supply teacher's classroom(s) regularly to ensure that they are teaching with comfort and confidence (p. 34). Such gestures, O'Connor (2009) adds, "let substitute teachers know that they are recognized as part of the school team" (p. 34). This type of conscious inclusion works to position OTs as legitimate, rather than marginal, members in a community of practice, the process of which may cause a positive "ripple effect" (O'Connor, 2009, p. 34) that benefits the substitute teachers' employment prospects, and frames schools as liberatory and safe spaces. O'Connor (2009), a retired school principal and former substitute teacher, explains that supply teachers who do, in fact, take pride in their work and aim to teach with passion, open-mindedness, and enthusiasm are those who develop greater rapports with students and staff members, enhance their familiarity with the school environment, and improve the chances of providing instructional continuity (p. 35). At a high school within my board, I have been placed on a "Preferred OT List" which, in essence, makes me a favoured choice for short-term supply positions within the school. I was appointed to said list not because of nepotism but, rather, because of my teaching practice.

The school's principal, earlier this year, had informed me that during his daily visits to my classrooms, he was impressed by my ability and willingness to provide, regardless of the subject matter, valuable instruction to students in the absence of their regular teacher. In every classroom, I put forth the earnest effort to get to know each student and engage in the planned material in a manner conducive to the development of critical thinking. Throughout the school day, I would see my students in the hallways or in the cafeteria but, rather than ignore me, the students would want to converse with me, ask me follow-up questions about their tasks, and seek my advice on college or university programs. On many occasions, students have remarked, "You're the only supply who actually teaches us." As flattering as this comment was, and is still

is, to me, it is equally as scary; what do other OTs do when they are in the classroom, if not teach? Upon talking with this same principal, I was told that substitute teachers typically bring books to class and, during the periods in which they are supposed to be teaching, will read or text on their cell phone. I must admit that, during some classes wherein students are asked to work on an ISU (Independent Study Unit), or silent read for the whole duration of the period, I have been—and still am—tempted to reach for my laptop and work on my own coursework or research project. What stops me, however, are the thoughts that the “real” homeroom teacher would not do so, that engaging in such unprofessional conduct *would* make me “just” a supply, and that not actually teaching, not fulfilling my vocation as a trained educator, would do a disservice to me, my peers and, most importantly, my students.

While a salient objective of critical, emancipatory pedagogy is, for Ellsworth (1989), the authentic, legitimate empowerment of students and their voices (p. 307), it is equally significant, I believe, that the teachers standing in front of and educating these students feel that they, too, are able and empowered. Though Duggleby and Badali (2007) argue that inclusion and participation within a school’s mainstream culture are formative markers of a teacher’s capacity and confidence, substitute teachers may continue to contribute positively to the development of critical pedagogy, even if they are not actively involved in the process of creating new curriculum. Best understood as a multitude of meanings, Breunig (2011) imagines critical pedagogy as an educative philosophy rooted in social justice, constructivism, critical consciousness, democracy, dialogism, anti-racism, feminism, and transformation (pp.12-13). Such a pedagogy, contra Giroux and McLaren (1991), need not be radical, but routine. Though OTs may not possess the ability to *develop* daily curricula (save, of course, for occasions when permanent teachers neglect or forget to provide lesson plans, in which case the OT is welcome to

create an original lesson related to the students' unit of study), their marginality affords them the opportunity—and the agency—to shape how they are explored and delivered. hooks (1994) suggests that to teach in a way that encourages excitement, educators must strive to transgress, to motivate critical interrogation, and to dissolve boundaries of practice (pp. 6-7). While OTs are asked to closely follow a teacher's lesson plan rather than sit passively at a desk, they should actively monitor students' progress, encourage critical questions, and relish teachable moments (Deubber, 2000, p. 74): times when a students' thought or action generates the need for informative intervention reflective of critical pedagogy. Substitute teachers should not be thankful to supervise a work period simply because it requires little effort from them; they should, instead, appreciate the chance—the challenge—to infuse a degree of criticality and pragmatism.

Perhaps one of the most unsettling aspects of occasional teaching is the inability to see the long-term impacts that critical pedagogy may have on their students. One instance that sticks out to me is an afternoon that I spent in a grade 4/5 split class. I had asked my students to play math games for the remaining ten minutes of the class before their end-of-day routine would begin. A female student approached me and explained to me that she was being excluded actively from a group that she wished to join. The three girls allegedly carrying out this exclusion claimed that they had formed a group of three, so they could not simultaneously include this girl and follow my instructions. They seemed quite defeated, however, when I reminded them that a grouping of four could easily become two groups of two students, and that they would still be following directions. This situation did not sit well with me, mainly because the level of protest from the three students made it obvious that they had orchestrated their group purposely to isolate an individual. Rather than forcing the group to accept another member, I

decided to engage in a brief, reflective dialogue about marginalization and bullying. The girls openly told me that the individual learner had been, for quite some time, resistant to the group members and their wish to be friends with her; she had preferred to play only with one girl in the group and, as they put it, “not share her secrets with us.”

The dialogue that followed focused on how people, in their daily lives, experience many events, emotions, or thoughts which they are not comfortable sharing with others. In an effort to model vulnerability and establish a mutual precarity of sorts, I offered myself as a safe example, sharing the loss of my brother as a tragedy that I do not, unless necessary, advertise to people with I do not feel close. The girls seemed to understand but, by the time our discussion had ended, so had our day. I left a note with the regular classroom teacher about what I had observed and what we, as a group, had discussed, but there was no way for me to carry on that conversation and to, in essence, build on the learning that may or may not have occurred. It seemed that the girls were, in fact, willing to critically reflect on their assumptions about another student and reconsider their hostile response to behaviour they did not understand, but it is all but impossible to know for sure. How, then, do OTs cope with the understanding that their instruction, though potentially valued, cannot always be measured in terms of its impact on student development? Although the work of substitute teachers may seem transient, especially to supply teachers themselves, it is important to remain optimistic: though we as OTs may never see the same students again, that does not mean that our lessons and our practices will cease to continue impacting the students whose paths crossed our own. Since the same can be said about non-permanent teachers who engage in poor teaching practices, it is essential that, with a limited window of opportunity, OTs make every moment count.

For supply teachers, the answers to questions of participation in the application of critical

pedagogies, it seems, rest unsurprisingly in the philosophy of critical pedagogy itself. Ellsworth (1989) charges educators with the duties of enforcing rules of rationality, idealism, validity, and reason in the classroom (p. 304), all of which, for OTs, can be implemented alongside behavioural management rules and policies outlined by schools and bodies of governance. Full-time educators are fortunate to work with the same group(s) of students in the same location every day but, while the career of a supply teacher is, for most, more vulnerable, OTs, too, I argue, are lucky: each day, they can expose wholly new students to the benefits and powers of different critical pedagogies, including anti-colonial, anti-racist, feminist, queer, and engaged (hooks, 1994, p. 10). Precisely *because* of their nomadism and allegedly partial role, therefore, supply teachers can disseminate the work of critical pedagogues to more students in a single day than a permanent teacher could throughout the course of an entire term. Though the prospect of planting many seeds in numerous classrooms is promising, many educators, I imagine, may feel the need for instant and discernible student growth. “In my professional role,” hooks (1994) writes, “I had to surrender my need for immediate affirmation of successful teaching (even though some reward is immediate) and accept that students may not appreciate the value of a certain standpoint or process straightaway” (p. 42). In this light, the work—and outcome—of permanent teachers and substitute teachers are the same; since educators may never see in their students, the lasting effects of having learned in a manner conducive to the development of critical pedagogy, it is increasingly important that *all* teachers, including those occasional, appreciate their task as formative role models in the lives of students.

The OSSTF (2005), in addition to disclosing the drawbacks and difficulties of occasional teaching, is wise to point to the profession’s potentially redeeming and enriching characteristics:

By the very nature of their work experience, occasional teachers can provide a great deal

of insight into our educational system. Most other educators—board officials, principals, classroom teachers—may have somewhat limited perspectives; they are familiar with one subject area, one area of responsibility, one school. The experienced and well-traveled occasional teacher acquires a wider perspective, a sort of bird’s-eye view of the system. They have a type of “freedom” within the system which makes them unique and allows them to judge the value placed on education by what they observe [...] Thus, they can provide us with insightful commentary and analysis. They know which administrators offer firm disciplinary support. They know the quality of the teachers in the system. They hear what the teachers really think of the way the schools are run. They know whether morale is high among both staff and students in the schools. (pp. 7-8)

Perhaps, most importantly, the OSSTF (2005) also contends that occasional teaching provides all OTs with the option to experiment daily with different tools, strategies, and approaches to better inform and perform their teaching practices. It is in this liminal, paradoxical space of opportunity and simultaneous inopportunity that OTs can continue to integrate elements of critical pedagogy.

Implications

What is arguably the most daunting question that has surfaced as a result of this study is: “Will substitute teachers *want* to do it?” Surely, permanent teachers are encouraged to give supply teachers engaging, educationally sound lesson plans in lieu of worksheets or videos (Wertz, 2006). Such a mentality would work to put a stop to the established “Press Play with Confidence” motto that has, for decades, tainted the reputation and role of substitute teachers in the classroom. While Wertz’s (2006) plea is warranted, is it feasible? Critical pedagogy, I argue, begins in and extends outward from the classroom, from the regular homeroom teacher who either is or is not dedicated to consistently facilitating, amongst students, the capacity to develop

critical twenty-first century literacies through enriching, authentic, performance-based tasks (Drake, Reid & Kolohon, 2014). Though the school culture can influence a permanent teacher's strategies and motivations, it is his or her attitude, perspective, and action which continuously informs and shapes the school culture from which teachers derive inspiration. Consequently, if a full-time teacher is unwilling or unable to practice critical pedagogy on a daily basis, what hope is there of being given supply lessons that do, in fact, demonstrate evidence of engaged, inclusive, and critical pedagogy? My study, for the most part, assumes that regular teachers indeed engage in sound pedagogical practices, but what happens when they do not? Pollack (2010) proposes that homeroom teachers should strive to create for and provide to OTs comprehensive, rich lesson plans (p. 19). While such a provision is ideal, it is rare. It may be argued, however, that regular teachers do, indeed, engage in practices that integrate the tenets of critical pedagogy, but do not have confidence in OTs doing the same.

Wertz (2006) argues that, as a substitute teacher, expectations of her teaching abilities and those of most substitute teachers are incredibly low, and that low expectations often result in low performance. She makes a plea to permanent teachers to trust that OTs are, in fact, competent and capable enough to teach their students; Wertz suggests that there are excellent substitute teachers who, like me, would welcome the opportunity to teach rather than merely babysit students, keep control of the classroom, and keep students well disciplined and "on task" with their busy work. I have, however, often overheard regular teachers, in their classrooms and in the staff room, try to plan for the day(s) when they will be absent. Educators are hesitant to leave "real" lessons because they suspect that OTs will not understand the material being explored, and will not know how to teach a lesson successfully without extensive scaffolding from the regular teacher (Authier, 2012). Comments like, "They won't know how to do that," or

“I’ll just give them a work period tomorrow” belittle the role of substitute teachers and pigeonhole their functionality within classrooms. Some of the regular teachers’ fears, however, are warranted: on several occasions, I have seen substitute teachers covering courses which they are not qualified or certified to teach. A larger, systemic issue with regard to eligibility, then, is at play. Oftentimes, because of availability and demand, students will, unfortunately, learn French from a Mathematics teacher and English from a Physical Education instructor. The process is cyclical: if teachers do not trust that OTs are able to do the work, the work itself will not be meaningful. Without meaningful work to teach, supply teachers will find themselves discouraged or, once again, sitting behind the regular teacher’s desk.

Substitute teachers may, indeed, be more in tune with current research about best practices and pedagogy than seasoned, contract teachers. Much of the professional development provided to contract teachers does not reach the classroom, or is explored minimally before it is given up. OTs, especially if they are very new to the teaching profession, have been formed as teachers in the framework of new research, so ideas about pedagogical approaches, methods, and resources may seem overwhelming and wholly unfamiliar to contract teachers, compared to OTs who may take these “new” approaches to teaching as commonplace. I have often experienced inner conflict, living contradictions (Whitehead, 1989) as an OT: I have been asked to teach lessons that I believed did reflect best practice. It raised larger questions for me about what the nature of teaching and learning was like in that classroom on a regular basis. Recognizing that classrooms are becoming more democratized with the necessary incorporation of technology and inquiry-based learning approaches, I have known other teachers to be conflicted about the type of lessons to leave for an OT. Many are confident that they would be comfortable and prepared to deliver a lesson that may appear chaotic, but these teachers are also familiar with their

students. Asking an OT to do the same, not knowing who that OT may be, or what their experience and background might include, I recognize, might lead teachers to choose to leave antiquated, “old school” tasks that privilege a banking model. While teachers perhaps *want* to leave rich lessons for OTs, they may fear the risk of leaving an OT a lesson that would be nearly impossible to implement without prior knowledge of the students, and the classroom's regular methods, resources, and pedagogies.

While Deubber (2000) suggests, to OTs, that they should take advantage of all teachable moments, I argue that substitute teachers should be doing more than simply relishing them (p. 74); they should, through instruction infused with elements of critical pedagogy, seek to *create* those teachable moments that, in many cases, define one's daily lessons. Substitute teachers are charged with the tasks of putting down their book or cell phone, shutting off their laptop, getting up from the regular teacher's chair, and actually teaching lessons in a manner that adds value and insight. Substitute teachers, I think, have the same capacity as full-time teachers to look for and facilitate the teachable moments that do not appear within a lesson plan. As an OT, I listen for and welcome moments when I can add value to a discussion or task to engage with students on a deeper level. I wonder, then, if a key to encouraging participatory learning through critical pedagogy is regular teachers encouraging OTs to take liberties with their supply plans. If the learning occurs, does it matter what the actual process looks like? I have adapted—and will continue to adapt—many rigid lesson plans that were not, in my opinion, reaching the students to improve engagement, minimize misbehaviours, and facilitate meaningful learning experiences. Though regular teachers will, for OTs, provide the structure or end goal of a lesson, it is through the “blank spaces” in the teacher's plans, and the cracks in the often rigid system of education, that critical pedagogy may develop.

Though Duggleby and Badali (2007) report a consensus amongst their study participants: that “‘good substitute teachers’ tend not to be offered contract work because they are too valuable as substitute teachers” (p. 30), such logic, I believe, is dangerous and largely misinformed. If OTs begin to believe that performing well within their workplaces might put them at risk for further marginalization, their quality of instruction, unfortunately, will continue to suffer. While it is too early to tell, for me, if my practices have, in some way, limited my opportunity for contract work, I like to think that a recognized work ethic and commitment to teaching excellence, coupled with more equitable hiring practices and stricter seniority lists, would qualify me as a worthy candidate for permanent work when such an opportunity arises. If administrators supposedly value an OT enough to want to keep him or her in their school as much as possible, why would they not want to hire on such an educator on a full-time basis so that he or she can teach in their own classroom, contribute positively to the school’s culture and curriculum, and belong, truly, as a staff member?

What may be an issue that ensues from effective performance is a disruption of authority, power, and knowledge in the regular classroom. Although teachers, from what I have observed, enjoy having exceptional OTs cover their classes, they may develop insecurities if their students begin to prefer the substitute's methods and approaches over their own. I have heard my students, on numerous occasions, ask, “Can you be our actual teacher? You’re so much better than our real teacher.” While the words “actual” and “real,” here, again underscore the pervasive discourse that situates OTs as subordinate educators to those who hold permanent contracts, they present, too, a contested site of teaching performance, whereby students engage actively in an evaluation that may certainly lead to a validating boost in self-esteem for OTs, but a significant drop in confidence amongst full-time teachers. It is important to remember—and to remind all

students—that every teaching style has merit and that each is simply different (Brock & Ryan, 2016, p. 12), rather than better or worse than, another. OTs must firstly be humble about their successes in the classroom; boasting of one’s pedagogical achievements in a note to the permanent teacher may erect stronger barriers to entry in a community of practice. Supplies must, too, be both conscious and respectful of the power dynamics and established routines in classrooms. Through critical pedagogy, OTs are encouraged to challenge the status quo and resist oppressive forms of teaching authority, but OTs are to be mindful of their marginal position and know that critical pedagogy unto itself is a form of resistance that introduces students to new learning opportunities in an emancipatory classroom.

But is teaching with critical pedagogy enough? My thoughts above outline what is, really, a central struggle for substitute teachers: many, who take their profession seriously as educators, *want* to be better than homeroom teachers, whose practices, in some cases, are not necessarily out of date but, to a young graduate, perhaps out of touch. We want to be better teachers than our own elementary and high school teachers. We want to bring emergent learning strategies from within our textbooks and lecture halls to the classroom. We want to permanently occupy the spaces of full-time teachers because we know we can. And rightfully so. Change, especially in education, is progress—not always, but sometimes. At the very least, it is a risk, a leap of faith that may land a worthwhile result. My quarrel, herein, is not with contract teachers but, rather, with the systemic, societal framing of education which has allowed to persist for generations. We are often told, as teacher-candidates, not to “reinvent the wheel” upon entering our first classrooms as the methods and practices still used today are the tried, tested, and true models which have endured over time. They are, however, also the most tired. Without critical pedagogies from substitute teachers, this wheel may continue to spin, uninterrupted. But when, if

ever, will we have the opportunity to be the change the system knows it needs? It is frustrating, both for me and my colleagues who work as supplies, to know that there are so many young, educated, and passionate occasional educators in the K-12 system who may, because of low seniority or subject qualifications which are not as marketable or as in demand as others, not get the chance to enter a classroom as a contract teacher for several years (Brock & Ryan, 2016, p. 1). This is all the more reason, however, that OTs must focus not on what they may be able to do in the future, but on what they can do in their capacity *now*.

Substitute teaching, though a stepping-stone to permanent teaching, should not be viewed as additional training or as practice; it is, for all intents and purposes, *real* teaching. It demands, from its educators, the very same principles, qualifications, and values expected from permanent teachers. Rather than viewing the practice of occasional teaching as a lower rung on a hierarchical ladder of instruction, it should be perceived as a distinct, noteworthy entry along a spectrum—a continuum of development and teaching experience that reflects not one's "rite of passage" into a world of expertise and permanence, but a challenging and potentially rewarding vocation that can, despite its precariousness, still draw from critical pedagogies to enhance learning for all students. Pressing questions, however, remain: Will substitute teachers *want* to teach? Will they want to take risks in their classroom to serve a greater purpose, one which extends beyond classroom control? Although I cannot, herein, make conclusions, my hope is that OTs, if well trained, prepared, and supported, will approach their work with a renewed purpose, a different understanding of what it is that they do—and can do—every day in the classroom. I hope that substitute teachers will see more opportunity for instruction and view their day as more than just a lucrative means to an end. Latifoglu (2014) suggests that, since most new teachers will not have their own class of students until many years after the completion of their teacher

preparation program, they will not be able to implement, immediately, the skills and strategies they learned as teacher-candidates. Latifoglu is correct about OTs being unable to claim ownership of a class, but his comment precludes, quite dangerously, the possibility of OTs actually being able to apply their knowledges as *real* teachers.

Further Research

Duggleby and Badali (2007) explain that, although recent research on occasional teaching includes gender as an analytical lens through which scholars can explore the performance and self-perception of supply teachers, most of the literature on occasional teaching still tends to focus on the importance of professionalism and classroom management. More research, then, is needed on the intersection of instruction and supply teaching. While this project in particular focuses on the possibility of drawing from and integrating critical pedagogy in one's classrooms, future research does not need to concentrate, exclusively, on critical pedagogy. It should, however, endeavour to explore how to make the instructional aspects of occasional teaching more effective, rewarding, and valuable for both educators and their students. Through interviews with willing participants, additional studies, with larger samples, can examine how other OTs perceive their transitory role. It may be worthwhile, Ciampa (2015) suggests, to create a longitudinal study that follows a single group of newly hired OTs to gauge, across space and time, how one's perceptions, practices, and outlooks evolve. Such a study would show if, through experience in the occasional teaching field, supplies start to feel more able to participate in and contribute to a school's culture and community.

Another research approach that may be productive is a comparison of OTs' attitudes, challenges, and perceptions across school boards (both public and separate), regions, provinces, or even countries. Although current literature focuses on occasional teaching in a specific state or

nation, little work has attempted to compare the fields of occasional teaching across borders and boundaries. Duggleby and Badali (2007) argue that few studies have documented the experiences of substitute teachers, and even fewer have explored the work in Canadian contexts (p. 23). While more research is needed in Canadian and, more specifically, in Ontarian contexts, interprovincial, intercontinental, and international work might be beneficial in outlining differences amongst and common trends and patterns between numerous pockets of substitute teachers, especially since, in many school boards across the U.S., OTs do not always require official training (Brown, 2012). Such findings will help to determine which OTs are most (dis)satisfied with their roles, and why.

In addition to focalizing substitute teacher satisfaction, more research should also focus on supply teachers' level of preparedness and knowledge upon entering the field. The CCOL (2008), for example, explains that, "except for a few local initiatives, there is little preparation for non-permanent teachers" (p. 3). Accordingly, academics and administrators alike should begin to consider, more seriously, what Teacher Education programmes, school districts and school boards, and teacher federations (including unions and professional associations) might do to play a more formative role in training and supporting OTs. Al-Bataineh (2009) explains that the "preparation of teachers is of vital importance to our nation's educational system. If we are to ensure our students the best possible education, we must provide them with teachers who have been well prepared" (p. 236). An exploration of how OTs are, in post-secondary settings, prepared for their new roles will inform what sorts of resources, lessons, literature, and professional development opportunities should be available to prospective teacher-candidates during their two years in Teachers College. My own instructors, for instance, had not discussed the certain possibility of occasional teaching. By highlighting the differences between permanent

and non-permanent teaching postings, faculties of education might provide all teacher-candidates with the opportunity to learn some of the basic strategies and pedagogical concepts of non-permanent teaching (CCOL, 2008, p. 3). This might provide a better understanding of this particular work, help those who will eventually engage in occasional teaching, and provide insight for those who leave lessons for a non-permanent teacher.

Pearce (2012) explains that “teachers who have recently graduated from teacher education programs find themselves entering a grim employment market” (p. 6). Consequently, the province’s Teacher Education programmes should start considering courses that will help pre-service teachers reconstruct their preconceived notions about occasional teaching to promote professional growth and development. Faculties and boards of education should consider creating a resource manual or handbook designed for newly hired substitutes, permanent classroom teachers, administrators, and teacher-candidates. This valuable manual could even include case studies accompanied by a series of thought-provoking questions and real-world guidance from the “experts in the field” that will prove valuable when teacher-candidates prepare for their interviews (Ciampa, 2015). Since occasional teaching is now becoming the gradual and increasingly extended route to the teaching profession for the majority of Ontario’s recent graduates, the competition for full-time job postings will continue to increase. Accordingly, even more certified teachers will have a greater reliance on occasional teaching. Despite these findings, however, few Teacher Education programmes within Ontario offer courses, workshops, or additional training to help prepare teacher-candidates for the reality of occasional teaching. Even fewer, I contend, offer information or training which focuses on sound pedagogical instruction in occasional teaching. As Ciampa (2015) argues, school boards, Ontario’s Ministry of Education, and Faculties of Education need to communicate and collaborate to foster a “well-

qualified, highly skilled occasional teacher who through training becomes a well-developed specialist in teaching at one school today, in another tomorrow, and in still another the day after tomorrow” (p. 146). Ciampa's (2015) emphasis on teaching suggests that, moving forward, OTs should learn how to create a positive learning atmosphere to teach effectively and meaningfully.

While Pollack (2010) investigates the marginalization of occasional teachers born outside of Canada, and those who belong to racial or ethnic minorities whose first language is not English, further research could examine the roles and potential resistance of substitute teachers, including those who self-identify as queer, homosexual, transgender, and/or intersex, who might experience societal marginalization and adversity in their communities of practice because of their orientation. A study which focuses on the particular academic subjects which non-permanent educators teach may also be beneficial if comparing the subject matter or discipline to an OT's attitude, difficulties, opportunity to actually teach lessons, and overall career satisfaction. Such work could, moreover, explore how teachers perceive the roles of temporary educators who teach these subjects, including Special Education (Calabrese & Javorsky, 2000). Some FSL teachers are often perceived in a less favourable manner by their colleagues and students' parents because the subject matter itself is, for many people, not considered essential in schooling (Gour, 2015). Given the marginal status that OTs occupy, then, it would be productive to investigate how supply FSL teachers, for instance, describe their roles and experiences. As an OT of Modern and International Languages, including FSL, I can certainly attest to the many occasions when permanent, non-FSL teachers have spoken poorly about the function of and need for French studies in both elementary and high schools. On a few occasions, I have seen French teachers' offices and workspaces (rarities unto themselves) used as custodial or storage centers, while French teachers have lamented the utter disregard for their profession. This insecurity is intensified by the notion that most FSL teachers must, wheeling

their cart, still enter the classrooms of regular teachers to instruct in lieu of having their own room.

In short, future research should underscore the *teaching* aspect of non-permanent teaching to continue shifting the current discourse toward one of competency and confidence in instruction rather than simply classroom management. Studies that center on the challenges and difficulties of substitute teaching are valuable but, arguably, even more beneficial would be research endeavours that can discuss the potential and redeeming qualities of occasional instruction: a legitimate form of teaching that, in today's precarious workforce, becomes increasingly necessary and invaluable. If the system of education, particularly within in Ontario, must rely ever more on the service and practice of OTs, then more research should look into what, exactly, substitute teachers, permanent teachers, administrators, and Teacher Education instructors can do to make instruction the central topic of occasional teaching that demands, within and outside of the field, credibility and respect.

Conclusion

If we are to elevate the status of OTs and regard them as certified, *real* educators, we need the support not only of an inclusive system of education that welcomes, includes, and values OTs (Pollack, 2010, p. 19), but the support of ourselves, as well. In much the same way that women can be part of the problem of patriarchal domination (hooks, 1994, p. 66), OTs who tend to categorize themselves as lesser—as *just* substitute teachers—rather than qualified and trained professionals, contribute to their own estrangement and legitimize a politicized discourse of inferiority. While I, myself, on numerous occasions, have answered facetiously, “I’m a nobody. Just a supply looking for his classroom,” to the questions, “Who are you? What are you doing here?” asked by school secretaries and administrators, I recognize that doing so actually feeds, rather than resists, a status of ambiguity that dissolves confidence and accepts exploitation

(Freire, 2000, p. 64). Freire (2000), moreover, notes that “[s]elf-depreciation is another characteristic of the oppressed, which derives from their internalization of the opinion the oppressors hold of them” (p. 63). What is most needed, then, is solidarity, and the dissemination of the understanding that a supply teacher is never not a *real* teacher. Admittedly, such a course of action is not easy. Paradoxically, the only reason why I am teaching occasionally is because I hope to not be doing so in the near future. I view my own role as a temporary effort, a provisional investment in a more secure future with greater stability. As Stephens (2013) argues, occasional teaching is often a “gateway to landing a first job” (p. 20). Such a belief, however, should not—and will not—negatively affect the quality of my teaching, nor the pride that I take in my current position. I will still, evoking Freire (2000), dialogue with students, push them to evaluate the efficacy, criticality, and practicality of their assigned, daily tasks, and participate in co-intentional education that sees both student and OT as Subject (p. 69).

Damianos (1998) suggests that although OTs will not necessarily be able to provide the differentiated activities expected of regular classroom teachers, this does not mean that the children cannot be provided with “quality learning experiences” (p. 33). One must remember, as Brock and Ryan (2016) explain, that supply teachers are trained professionals who have been hired by school boards to provide a positive learning experience for students; part of this education, I believe, is rooted in teachers’ commitment to engage in meaningful and quality instruction that adds value to teaching. But will such devotion be enough? It is important, too, to recognize the impactful role of the institution which, Freire (2000) suggests, makes it easier to understand why, naturally, the oppressed may distrust their ability and positionality (p. 63). The Ontario Ministry of Education’s ongoing promotion of high stakes testing and results-based learning means, according to Pollack (2010), that “what occasional teachers do in the classroom

has become more relevant. We need to ensure that our students are well served by all [OTs]” (p. 19). While Pollack’s comments are accurate, should OTs, in their efforts to maintain what little employment they can gain, simply subscribe to a learning model devoid of all creative thought? Zubrzycki (2012) similarly explains that, in the U.S., since a regular teacher misses between six and thirteen days of school each year, students may exhibit “lower-than-expected achievement results” on standardized assessments, the process of which has led to a high number of educators calling for the creation of a “professionally prepared” supply workforce (p.1). Gresham, Donihoo, and Cox (2008) note that supply teachers are being summoned to help “meet high academic and accountability standards” (p. 29), but is this why we have OTs? Should supplies not work to enrich and enhance both teaching and learning?

If ministries of education, administrators, educators, and parents expect students to think and act in a critical manner, then teachers, both occasional and permanent, should lead by example. An OT's lesson plan should be viewed as more than just a 75-minute period of “busy work” and more than another instalment toward a full day of pay; each lesson plan should be perceived as a stepping stone, a relevant, accessible, and meaningful realization of transgressive and progressive critical pedagogy. We believe ourselves to be free and far from the Fordism epoch of education, but our constant dependence on and acquiescent acceptance of systemic, standardized assessment and instructional practices confine us in a state of devolution when what we need, most of all, is evolution. We cannot, as both occasional and permanent teachers, consider ourselves proponents of progress and of change if we continue to look toward the future of education from within the defunct factories of our past. It is time that substitute teachers make praxis more than an unrealized ideal or buzzword so that students can benefit from a holistic

pedagogy that is not part-time, and improve the world of tomorrow with the education of today.

Just do not forget to return the key.

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